

The Epistles to the  
**CORINTHIANS**

A commentary by  
**J.M. DAVIES**









# **The Epistles to the Corinthians**

**A Concise Commentary**

**J. M. Davies**

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# Preface

This concise commentary or exposition of the epistles to the Corinthians was written in 1960 at the request of the Evangelical Literature Fellowship of India. It was then translated into three Indian vernaculars. The editors did not wish reference to be made to authors and books not easily available to the Indian community. That is the reason why, in contrast to the short commentary on Colossians, there were no quotations in this exposition. While I have over the years read and consulted many writers on the epistles, and did so when writing the MSS, I have sought to avoid quoting anyone's statements, as I would have done had it been the policy of the editors. They were also anxious that the exposition should contain some suggestive lines of study for preachers.

The area in South India where it was our privilege to labour was Kerala State. It is the only part of India where the gospel taken to India in apostolic days took permanent root. The Jacobite Syrian Church with its patriarchs in Antioch survived the centuries, but unfortunately in a very decadent form, devoid of spiritual life and power. Later in the days of the Portuguese invasion Roman Catholicism was forcibly imposed on many through the instrumentality of the Portuguese bishop Alexo DeMenzies. At the close of the last century it pleased God to grant a day of visitation when literally thousands thronged to listen to the gospel. Consequent upon the visitation of grace an assembly was formed in Kumbanadu, and at the same time a German missionary

connected with the Basel Mission seceded from the mission and began serving the Lord in what was then known as Cochin State. The Lord raised up Indian brethren with a zeal for the gospel and ability to teach the Word. When we arrived in India in 1920 there were a large number of assemblies scattered over Travancore and Cochin States — now incorporated in what is known as Kerala State. The annual conventions were large. Along with the preaching of the gospel there were many opportunities for the ministry of the Word. Hence, by force of circumstance as well as from a God-given desire to teach the Word, one was naturally drawn to a study of the epistles. In a large and growing work as in a large and growing family problems arise both as to doctrine and practice. We were not blessed with many elder brethren who could teach, but the help of the late Mr. Handley Bird was of inestimable value both as a teacher and as a spiritual father.

One owes a debt of gratitude to the oral and written ministry of many. **Principles of gathering** by the late George Goodman was a help in my younger days. Then the oral ministry of the late Mr. J. H. Todd of Australia. Then the **Charter of the Church** by J. R. Caldwell. Then later the volumes of **Word studies** by A. T. Robertson and other expository works and commentaries have all been consulted. But with an itinerant ministry it has not always been possible to have one's books at hand. However, it has been of great benefit to glean among the sheaves, beat it out and seek thereby to provide food for the family of God and the preaching of the gospel.

The original MSS have been revised and much has been rewritten with many additional notes and quotations added.

It is a great honour to be privileged to feed the flock and family of God, and if this unpretentious volume will encourage some to addict themselves to the study of the Scriptures to that end one will be grateful.

It is a pleasure to dedicate the book to the believers and workers connected with Christian assemblies in India, to whom I am greatly indebted for the grace I have seen and experienced among them.

*J. M. Davies*



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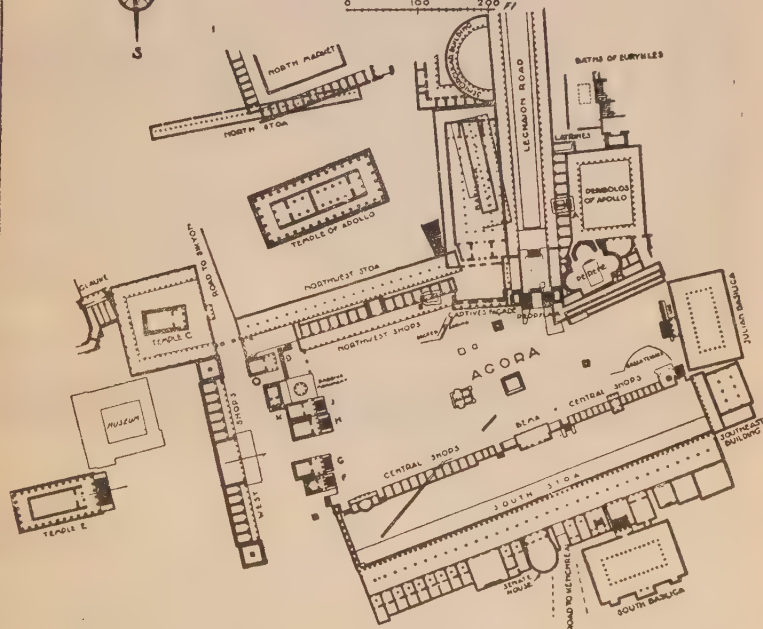


# CORINTH

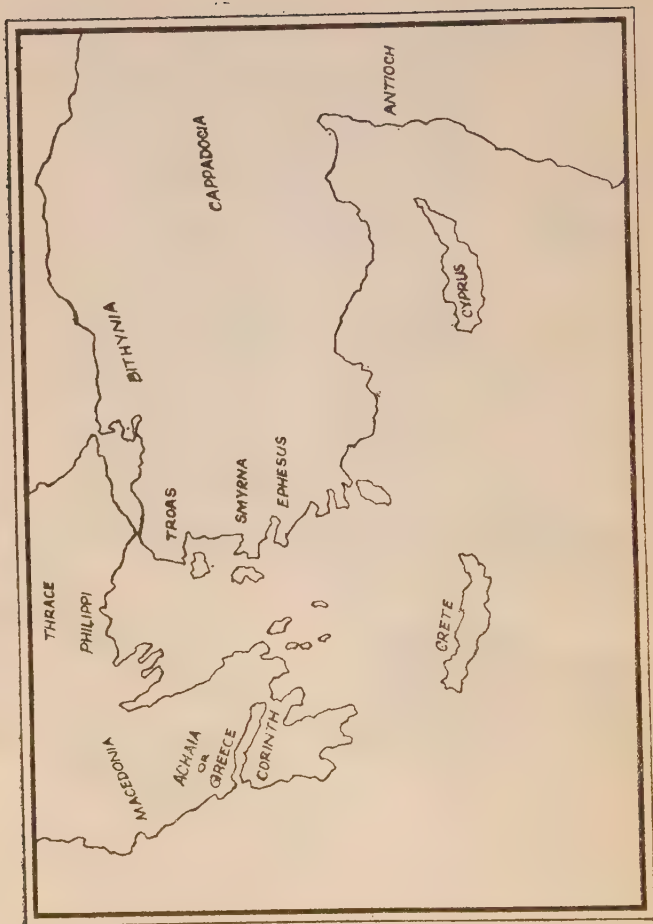
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*The eastern Mediterranean lands.*



# The Epistles to the Corinthians

## Introduction

As shown in the accompanying sketch, Corinth was situated on the narrow isthmus connecting the Grecian mainland with the province of Achaia, of which it was the capital and chief city. Destroyed in the second century B.C., it was later rebuilt by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony. Because of its strategic position it was militarily very important. The citadel of Corinth, the Acrocorinthus, 2000 ft. high, guarded all its approaches. Ships could traffic there through the Port Cenchrea, and from the west through the gulf of Corinth, and in the fountain of Peirene the citadel had an ever abundant supply of water. Corinth became a centre of commercial activity and material prosperity, an important trade centre of the Mediterranean with a cosmopolitan population made up of Romans, Greeks and Jews. The Isthmian games alluded to in the epistles attracted many. The idolatry and licentiousness of the city were notorious. It is said that a thousand devadasis (temple virgins or prostitutes) were kept at the temple of Aphrodite for the service of strangers. Fornication was considered as an act of consecration to the goddess rather than an act of desecration of the body. Corinth was the Sodom of the Aegean. Old Corinth is today a small village of some 500 inhabitants. While in the city in 1952 I saw in the small museum the excavated relics of phallic worship similar to what I saw in Benares in December 1950.

There are two recorded visits of the apostle Paul to the city, and in the second epistle he refers to a possible

third visit (2 Cor. 13 : 1). On his first visit (Acts 18 : 1-17) he stayed there 18 months or more. During that time we read that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." The second visit lasted three months. Of it little is reported, but from the epistles it is evident that it was an unpleasant visit (2 Cor. 2 : 1). It is difficult to ascertain with certainty whether the apostle paid his purposed third visit or not.

In the assembly at Corinth there were some Jewish converts, such as Aquilla and Priscilla, Crispus, Sosthenes and others, but **racially** the majority were Gentiles or from among the Gentiles. Their names — Erastus, Quartus, Gaius, etc. — indicate their Roman background. Before their conversion they were "carried away as they were led" to idolatry of the basest kind (1 Cor. 12 : 2). **Socially** there were not many men of culture : not many wise, or men of learning; not many mighty, or men of wealth; not many noble, or of the nobility, or of the higher castes. In social rank they were just zeros (1 : 26-28). **Morally** many had been of the lowest (6 : 9-11). In order to puncture and deflate their pride the apostle had to remind them of these things. Their pride had led to contention (cf. Prov. 13 : 10) and a party spirit. This in turn had hindered spiritual growth (1 Cor. 3 : 1-4). Being babes and carnally minded they were the more easily deceived (6 : 9; 15 : 33; 2 Cor. 11 : 3-4) and tossed about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4 : 14), and were incapable of assessing the relative value of the gifts and their exercise, or the greater value of grace.

## The Epistle

During the time Paul preached at Corinth, Gallio was the Roman governor. This enables us to fix the date of Paul's ministry there at about A.D. 51. The first epistle



was written from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16 : 8), possibly at the time of the Paschal season (5 : 7), some three years later.

In the epistle reference is made to a previous letter (5 : 9). This we do not possess, but its teaching would seem to be embodied in chapter 5. The apostle wrote this, the first letter preserved, because of certain reports which had reached him through the house of Chloe regarding the factious spirit and moral laxity that prevailed (1 : 11; 5 : 1). The assembly had also sent an enquiry by the hand of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, seeking Paul's help and counsel regarding certain problems with which they were faced (7 : 1; 8 : 1; 12 : 1; 15 : 12; 16 : 17). It would seem that some deceivers were at work there also, although the apostle does not specifically name them, but he gives solemn and stern warnings : "Be not deceived . . ." (6 : 9; 15 : 33). These false teachers had introduced false doctrine, and the apostle mentions in a definite way their erroneous teaching concerning the resurrection (15 : 12). The burden of the epistle is reproof, along with necessary correction. Nevertheless it contains important instruction regarding many subjects not to be found in any other book of the New Testament. It is intended to govern the conduct of the believer in relation to the assembly, spiritually, morally, and ministerially.

Another way to study the epistle is to note the two main divisions. In chs. 1-6 the apostle is dealing with matters of which he had heard through the house of Chloe. (1 : 11) and others ((5 : 1). Chs. 7-16 deal with the matters regarding which the assembly had asked questions. These are introduced with the words, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me" (7 : 1).

It is important to notice that the apostle deals firstly with the subjects which the assembly had seemingly not thought it necessary to enquire about. What was of primary importance to the apostle was only secondary to them. This in itself was an indication of their carnal state, of their low spiritual condition and immaturity or retarded growth (3 : 1-4).

It is instructive to note the many cardinal Christian doctrines which are referred to in the course of the epistle. Here we have what may be termed "the faith of an apostolic church".

**Its Theology** (The doctrine of God). There are many references and allusions to the doctrine of the Trinity (1 Cor. 8 : 6; 12 : 4-6; 2 Cor. 13 : 14, etc.) and to God's sovereignty (1 Cor. 1 : 27-30 ; 2 : 10 ; 3 : 6; 12 : 18).

**Its Christology** (The doctrine of Christ). Both the essential deity and the true humanity of our Lord are clearly and emphatically taught. The title "Lord" is used nearly 100 times in the two epistles. This is more than in any of other epistles of Paul. Christ is "The Lord of Glory". To one who had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees like Paul this can only be understood as the equivalent of the Old Testament title "Jehovah". On the other hand His place of subjection as the servant of the Father is clearly defined (3 : 23; 11 : 3; 15 : 28).

**Its Pneumatology** (The doctrine of the Holy Spirit). Teaching regarding His personality, deity, and equality with the Father, and His absolute sovereignty, is unmistakably interwoven into the fabric of the epistle. There are over 20 references to the Spirit which should be noted.

**Its Ecclesiology** (The doctrine of the Church). This is

given a place of importance. In this respect it is the complementary epistle to Ephesians in which the apostle gives instruction regarding the mystery "Christ and the Church" (Eph. 1 : 22-23; 5 : 32).

**Its Soteriology.** The doctrine of salvation is stated very clearly. Paul does not indulge in any ambiguities. There are no maybe's, no suppositions. All his doctrines are certainties, unchangeable verities, impregnable fortresses (15 : 1-5).

**Its Eschatology.** The doctrine of the last things regarding the consummation and the coming of the Lord is something concerning which the apostle was definite. He was under no misapprehension and speaks with no uncertain sound as to death and afterwards (2 Cor. 5), and the great events of the future, such as the Lord's triumphant return and reign (1 Cor. 15 : 21-58).

**The Scriptures of Truth.** His appeal to the written word in his oft-repeated saying, "It is written . . ." makes it evident that to Paul the Scriptures were the final, the supreme court of appeal. There is none higher.

**Its Demonology** (The doctrine of Satan and the demons). Note the many references to Satan and the epistles. He is the "god of this age" and "Belial" (2 Cor. 4 : 4; 6 : 15).

**Its Anthropology.** The doctrine of Man, his creation, fall and redemption, and also his constituent parts — spirit, soul and body — are clearly defined. These are profitable avenues of study for the student, and afford ample material for the preacher.

# **First Epistle to the Corinthians**



The Temple of Apollo dominates the ancient site of Corinth today. Behind rises the fortress of Acro-Corinth. Near the temple the agora, or market-place, contains the remains of shops, temples, fountains, houses ... and the "bema", the official rostrum from which the Roman governor spoke.

# **An analytical outline of the First Epistle**

1. **Introduction (1 : 1-9)**
  - A. Salutation (1-3)
  - B. Thanksgiving (4-9)
2. **The Christian Assembly and its unity (1 : 10-4 : 21 —  
contention and its consequences)**
  - A. In relation to the gospel (1 : 10-2 : 5)
  - B. In relation to Christian growth (2 : 6-3 : 4)
  - C. In relation to Christian service (3 : 9-4 : 21)
3. **The Christian Assembly and its sanctity (5 : 1-6 : 11)**
  - A. In relation to God (5 : 1-13)
  - B. In relation to one another (6 : 1-11)
4. **The Christian Assembly and personal liberty (6 : 12-  
11 : 1)**

This whole section is seen to be in the form of an inverted parallelism, which may be set out as follows :—

- A. All things are lawful for me (6 : 12)  
Note the two limitations.
- B. In relation to meats (6-13a)
- C. In relation to the body — fornication (6 : 13b-20)



- C. In relation to the body — marriage (7 : 1-40)
- B. In relation to meat offered to idols (8 : 1-10 : 22)
  - (a) In relation to the weak brother (8 : 1-13)
  - (b) In relation to the gospel (9 : 1-23)
  - (c) In relation to the reward (9 : 24-27)
  - (d) In relation to fellowship with God (10 : 1-22)
- A. All things are lawful for me (10 : 23-30)
  - Note the two limitations (10 : 23)
  - Concluding summary and exhortations (10 : 31-11 : 1)
- 5. The Christian Assembly and its ministry (11 : 2-15 : 11)
  - A. Godward (11 : 2-34)
  - B. Churchward (12 : 1-14 : 40)
  - C. Worldward (15 : 1-11)
- 6. The Christian Assembly and the final victory (15 : 12-58)
  - A. The resurrection of Christ (12-19)
  - B. The resurrection of the dead (20-49)
  - C. The resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the living (50-58)
- 7. The Christian Assembly and its responsibility (16 : 1-21)
  - A. To the poor among the saints (1-4)
  - B. To those addicted to the ministry (5-21)
- 8. Conclusion (16 : 22-24)



# O.T. quotations in I Corinthians

- Ch. 1 : 19. "I will destroy . . ." (Isa. 29 : 14). This was a word of warning to Israel to to whom the Word of God had become as a sealed book, and who trusted in a mere lip service.
- 1 : 20. "Where is the wise . . ." (Isa. 19 : 12). A reference to the wise men of Egypt, the stargazers and the astrologers.
- 1 : 20. "Where is the scribe . . ." (Isa. 33 : 18). A warning to the false teachers in Israel, especially in view of the coming day of Jacob's trouble.
- 1 : 20. "Hath not God made . . ." A reference seemingly to the boastful wisdom of false prophets.
- 1 : 31. "He that glorieth . . ." (Jer. 9 : 23). A warning against a false confidence when their doom was fast approaching.
- 2 : 9. "Eye hath not seen . . ." (Isa. 64 : 4 cf. Ezek. 4 : 4). A reference of the blessings in store for Israel through the remnant.
- 3 : 19. "He taketh the wise . . ." (Job. 5 : 13). A principle in divine operations.
- 3 : 20. "The Lord knoweth the . . ." (Ps. 94 : 11). Context similar to that of

Job. 5 : 12, "Blessed is the man whom the Lord chasteneth". A warning against pride and arrogance.

- 4 : 6. "That which is written . . .". Not a reference to any special scripture, and not a quotation, but a reference to the general teaching of Scripture as to the sphere and limits placed upon the leaders. It may refer to what the apostle had stated in the preceding chapters. No one has authority to introduce anything not warranted in the Word of God, cf. the sin of Nadab (Lev. 10 : 1).
- 5 : 13. "Therefore put away . . ." (cf. Deut. 15 : 5).
- 6 : 16. "The twain, saith He . . ." (Gen. 2 : 24).
- 7 : 8-11. The creation of the man and woman (Gen. 2).
- 9 : 7. "Who planteth a vineyard . . ." (cf. Deut. 20 : 6).
- 9 : 9. "Thou shalt not muzzle . . ." (Deut. 25 : 4).
- 10 : 11. "They are written for our admonition . . .". This covers all the events recorded of the wilderness journey of Israel,  
"All under the cloud . . ." (Exod. 13 : 21)  
"All passed through the sea . . ." (Exod. 14 : 22)  
"did all eat . . ." (Exod. 16 : 15)

- "did all drink . . ." (Exod. 17 : 6)  
 "They were overthrown . . ." (Num.  
 14 : 29-37)  
 "they lusted . . ." (Num. 11 : 4-34)  
 "idolaters . . ." (Exod. 32 : 4-6; Num. 25)  
 "fornication . . ." (Num. 25 : 1-18)  
 "serpents . . ." (Num. 21 : 6)  
 "murmured . . ." (Num. 14 : 29-37).
- 10 : 18. "eating of the sacrifices . . ." (Lev. 3 : 3;  
 7 : 15-34).
- 10 : 20. "No god . . ." (Lev. 17 : 7).
- 10 : 22. "Jealousy . . ." (Deut. 32 : 21).
- 10 : 28. "The earth is the Lord's . . ." (Ps. 24 : 1).
- 11 : 25. "The blood of the new covenant . . ." (cf. Exod. 24 : 8; Zech. 9 : 11).
- 13 : 5. "Love taketh not account . . ." (RV) (cf. Zech. 8 : 17).
- 14 : 25. "He will fall down . . ." (Isa. 45 : 14; Zech. 8 : 23).
- 14 : 21. "By men of strange . . ." (Isa. 28 : 11; Deut. 28 : 39). A clear warning of the impending judgment on Israel.
- 15 : 3-4. "According to the . . ." death, burial and resurrection on the third day.
- 15 : 25. "He must reign . . ." (Ps. 110 : 1, also Ps. 2 and Ps. 22).
- 15 : 32. "Let us eat and drink . . ." (Isa. 22 : 15; 56 : 12).
- 15 : 20. "Christ the firstfruits . . ." (Lev. 23 : 11).

15 : 21-22. Death through Adam (Gen. 3 : 17-19).

15 : 49. "The image . . ." (cf. Gen. 5 : 3).

15 : 54. "Death is swallowed up . . ." (Isa. 25 : 8).

16 : 13. ""Quit ye like men . . ." (cf. 1 Sam. 4 : 9;  
2 Sam. 10 : 12; Iša. 46 : 8).

The apostle thus cites from each of the books of Moses. He draws upon the record of the creation of man and the fall of man, and he quotes from Malachi. He quotes from each of the sections of the O.T., the historical, poetical and prophetical. He puts them all under tribute and acknowledges all as authentic and authoritative. This is a matter of basic importance to every Christian assembly.

# The First Epistle – Commentary

1. **Introduction.** (ch. 1:1-9). These introductory verses contain the salutation (1-3) and the thanksgiving (4-9). These verses are a brief summary of what is expanded at length in the epistle.

## A. Salutation (1-3):

“Paul, called to be an apostle . . .” (v. 1). Paul affirms his apostleship as he does in most of his epistles. The epistles to the Philippians and to the Thessalonians and Philemon are exceptions. He was an apostle by calling, even as the Christians in Corinth are designated as “saints” by the same effectual call (1:2-9). The will of God in connection with it had been revealed to him personally at the time of his conversion, and again later through his servants at Antioch (Acts 13:15). The first takes precedence as being the more important. The second was confirmatory only. The order of the words “Christ Jesus” indicate that he was constituted an apostle by the exalted Lord in contrast to the way the 12 had been ordained.

“Unto the church (or assembly) of God . . .” The assembly, or ecclesia, at Corinth was composed of those who had been called, sanctified or set apart to God, and saved through the gospel (1:24, 2, 18). “In Christ Jesus” they were chosen, sanctified and enriched (1:30, 2, 5). The meaning of the word “ecclesia” may be gathered from two instances where it is used in the book of Acts. In ch. 7:38 the nation of Israel is called

the "church in the wilderness". It was a company called out of Egypt and also brought out by redemption. In connection with the demonstration against Paul in Ephesus we read of a confused assembly or a disorderly assembly, or an unauthorized assembly, and of a regular assembly (19:32, 39). The regular assembly was an assembly of those who had the responsibility of the government of the city, a representative body. The church of God in Corinth then was a called out company invested with a responsibility for government and discipline. It was not to be a disorderly or confused gathering as unfortunately it became on occasions (11:17-18). The church of God in Corinth was not a segment or a small percentage of the believers in Corinth, but included all the Christians in Corinth (14:23). When there were several companies in one city as in Rome each was designated by the place where they met (Rom. 16:5). Though addressed to the church of God at Corinth the salutation makes it clear that it is both universal and age-abiding in its value.

"With all that in every place . . ." These are designated as "churches of God", "churches of Christ" and "churches of the saints" (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 11:16; 14:33). While each was a separate lampstand (Rev. 2-3), they were bound together by a common bond of faith, hope and love. It was an organic rather than an organizational unity. No union was formed. They were not amalgamated or federated with a central place or board of authority to control them. We read of the "churches of Galatia", and the "churches of Asia" and of "Macedonia", but we do not read of the church of Asia or of Galatia. In view of the factions that existed in the church at Corinth note should be taken of the word "all" so often used in the epistle. They all called on the

one Lord. This was to be a unifying bond. "Obedience to his will as Lord was to be the uniting law of life." (Hort. Christian Ecclesia). Calling on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord is an echo of Joel 2:32. It is a clear recognition of His essential deity. The oneness or unity of the nation of Israel was clearly indicated by the Lord in his words to Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people . . ." and later in the words which he was commissioned to speak to Pharaoh "Let my people go . . ." (Exod. 3:7; 5:1). It was illustrated in the way all of the tribes were represented, each by a precious jewel on the breastplate worn by the high priest (Exod. 28:29). It was further emphasized when they had multiplied so that they were "as the sand which is by the sea in multitude". The Lord gave Solomon "largeness of heart even as the sand that is on the sea shore" (1 Kings 4:20, 29). It was remembered by the priest in the days when there was civil war between Israel and Judah. The twelve loaves continued to be put on the table of shewbread, and the burnt offerings continued to be offered daily, morning and evening, for all Israel (2 Chr. 12:10-11). In the darkest days of the ten tribes under Ahab and Jezebel when the apostacy reached its worst Elijah built an altar of 12 stones (1 Kgs. 18:31). And in the days of their captivity as the 70 years were drawing to a close, Daniel the intercessor interceded for "all Israel" (Dan. 9:7, 11), and he identified himself with them even in their sin. Again in the days when the remnant returned from Babylon, in the days of Ezra, the ready scribe in the law of the Lord, the teacher, twelve bullocks were offered for all Israel (Ezra. 7:10; 8:35). These illustrations of the high priest, the king, the priests, the prophet, the intercessor and the teacher serve to underline the importance of the words "with all



that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord". It is a message which all who take the lead among the Lord's people should take to heart.

**"Grace and peace . . ."** (v. 3). This salutation is common to almost all the epistles. It expresses the desire for their true spiritual prosperity, more especially in their collective life and witness. Grace introduces us to all its companions, such as truth (John. 1 : 17); supplication (Zech. 12 : 10); apostleship or service (Rom. 1 : 9); and glory (Ps. 84 : 12). The Father and the Son are conjointly invoked, an indication of the apostolic acknowledgement of Son's equality with the Father.

#### **B. Thanksgiving (4-9) :**

**"I thank my God always on your behalf . . ."** In this, reference is made to the many ways they had been enriched "in Christ Jesus" (4-5). The testimony of Christ (v. 6) is the gospel concerning Christ. In 2 : 1 it is called the testimony of God, and in 15 : 1-3 the gospel. The change wrought in them was a confirmation of its power. Compare Rom. 1 : 16, which was written from Corinth. The Gospel does not impoverish a man. It is the true wisdom, it brings true riches, "yea, durable riches and righteousness" (Prov. 8 : 18). The Corinthians were thus enriched in :

- (a) Utterance (Logos), that is, with a message, the message or the word of the Cross (cf. v. 18).
- (b) Knowledge, that is, the experimental knowledge of God and His truth.
- (c) Gift, the God-given ability to impart the message and the knowledge.
- (d) Hope, the coming or the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- (e) Assurance, the guarantee that they would be preserved "unto the end" with no charge against them in the day of Christ (Rom. 8 : 33; Col. 1 : 22). The word translated "confirm" was used as a technical term for guarantee in the Koine — the Greek of the common people.
- (a) Fellowship, Christian fellowship. The fellowship of those who have been similarly called in a channel of enrichment.

Though their failures were many, their enrichment gave Paul great cause for praise. This is illustrated in Ruth being enriched and her poverty and plight forgotten by her union with Boaz, the man of wealth. Five times within the compass of this brief introduction the apostle speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving Him His full title; His name; His equality with the Father; His revelation in glory; His day; and His fellowship. The context in which the expression "day of Christ" is mentioned would point to our manifestation before Him at the Judgment seat (cf. Phil. 1 : 6, 10; 2 : 16).

**"The fellowship of His Son"** (v. 9) is descriptive of the assembly at Corinth. Compare ch. 10 : 16-17 where reference is made again to this fellowship. The call of God, the blood or death of Christ, and membership in the body of Christ, form the true basis for this fellowship. The use of the full title describes its character. It is the fellowship of "His Son" (His Deity); Jesus (His manhood and Saviourhood Matt. 1 : 21); Christ (His Messiahship); and Lord (His glory, cf. Acts 2 : 36).

## 2. The Christian Assembly and its unity :

**Contention and its consequences :** (1 10-4 : 21).

A. In relation to the gospel (1 : 10-2 : 5).

“Now I beseech you . . .” (v. 10-11). Despite the unifying bonds — the name of the Lord and the common inclusive fellowship — there were divisions and contentions among them. This was a work of the flesh (Gal. 5 : 19-20). It had its root in pride (Prov. 13 : 10). It was through difference of speech that the earth was divided (Gen. 10 : 13). Sowing with divers seeds was forbidden (Deut. 22 : 9). The apostle beseeches them to be “perfectly joined”. The word is used of “mending” nets (Matt. 4 : 21) and of resetting a dislocated bone (Gal. 6 : 1). Their strife was affecting their work in the gospel as well as the spiritual, harmonious and healthy activity of the assembly. Thus Paul’s appeal touches the two causes for the division at Corinth — doctrinal differences and personal incompatibility.

“Now this I say . . .” (v. 12). They were making party leaders of the servants of God, being “puffed up” for one against another, thus thinking of them in a way contrary to what the Scriptures teach relative to servants (4 : 1). Four parties are referred to. Those named were not in any way responsible for such party strife. Later Paul says that he used his name and that of Apollos by way of illustration (4 : 6). The true culprits were doubtless some self-appointed leaders referred to with a touch of sarcasm by the apostle as “instructors” — pedagogues (4 : 15), slaves who were deputed to look after the children. The first three parties erred by making party leaders of God’s servants, a personality cult. They thought themselves “spiritual” (cf. 14 : 37). Paul’s affirmation in 2 Cor. 10 : 7 does not seem to have any bearing on this. There he is dealing with the false apostles. The fourth party erred by claiming direct

communication with Christ and therefore did not need the help of servants. They were the most dangerous.

**“Is Christ divided . . .”** (v. 13). The factions and contentions had a threefold result. These are indicated by the three questions asked. Division and sectarianism deny the headship of Christ and the oneness of the body. They deny the central importance of the Cross and its message, and also the sufficiency of the name or authority of Christ. They tend to introduce another authority. These three questions are considered in their reverse order by the apostle.

**“. . . I baptized none of you . . .”** (vs. 14-17a). Evidently it was not the apostle’s practice to do the baptizing. In Corinth he had baptized but a few. Had he believed baptism to be unnecessary or of no importance he would not have baptized any. He did baptize some, and moreover he has given important teaching based on believers’ baptism in Rom. 6 : 1-7; Col. 2 : 11-13, etc., but like Peter he delegated the baptizing to others (Acts. 10 : 48). On the other hand, if baptism was essential to salvation he could not have spoken of it as he does in those verses. It is the seeds of ritualism, the beginning of Pharisaism that the apostle is combating in this portion. Those who did the baptizing seemed to claim those they baptized as their followers, members of their party.

**“Not with wisdom of words . . .”** (17b-25). Ritualism’s twin enemy of the gospel — rationalism, the “wisdom of this world”; the “wisdom of men”; the “wisdom of the wise”, and the “wisdom of words”, is next felled as a mighty Goliath. The apostle used neither philosophy nor oratory in his preaching at Corinth. To him they

were as Saul's armour to David (1 Sam. 17:36-39). He considered them to be carnal weapons. Paul would not garland the cross; he would not decorate its message lest it should nullify its effect. The issues involved are intensely solemn and eternal in their character. It is useless to make the simple gospel seem complicated in order to please the intelligentsia. The word, or preaching, or the message of the cross is the great divide. It separates the perishing on the one hand and the saved on the other. Salvation is viewed as a past experience (Rom. 8:24; 2 Tim. 1:9); a present state (Eph. 2:5); a present process (1 Cor. 1:18) and a future prospect (1 Thess. 5:9). The quotations in verses 19-20 (Isa. 20:14; 19:12; 33:18) constitute a challenge. The morally degraded state of society in Corinth, the very citadel and temple or shrine of wisdom as it were, revealed its utter weakness and sterility, its barrenness and bankruptcy. Paul virtually asks them to produce evidence to prove the effectiveness and power of their philosophy. It had been on trial, placed in the balances and found wanting. It had been demonstrated as foolish, even as the law had been shown to be "weak and beggarly" (Gal. 4:9). The philosophy of the Greek and the Pharisaism of the Jew left them still in the gutter and slime. They accomplished nothing for their adherents. Messiah crucified was a stumbling-block to the Jews as they could only think of a reigning Messiah. To the Greeks it was foolishness. They considered it the essence of weakness and folly. But its message was wiser than man's philosophy and stronger than the strength of the law.

"Behold . . . . calling . . ." (26-30). Having shown the bankruptcy and utter helplessness of Jewish legality and Grecian philosophy, the apostle calls upon the



Corinthian believers to take heed to their calling, as later he exhorts them to take heed as to how they build (3 : 10), and behave (8 : 9), and boast (10 : 12). The three claims to belong to the world's aristocracy are mentioned in v. 26 — erudition, wealth and nobility of birth. Not many among them could measure up to that standard. On the contrary God had deliberately chosen the most unlikely and the most unpromising material in order thereby to display His grace and power. The illiterate, the foolish, as against the wise; the weak and the poor as against the wealthy (v. 27); and the outcaste, the despised, the mere zeros as against the noble (v. 28) were chosen of set and definite purpose so that no flesh should take any praise. The power of the gospel is thus contrasted with the weakness and inability of their philosophy. The cross was erected on Golgotha, the place of a skull.

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus . . .” (30-31). It was by God's sovereign electing grace that they were in Christ. The three great words righteousness, sanctification and redemption are better considered as included in wisdom and as an expansion of it rather than associated with it. Christ is made unto us wisdom from God, a golden casket, as it were, containing three priceless jewels. These three are a summary of the message of the gospel as expounded in Romans, chs. 1-8. The order of the words indicates that redemption is to be understood as the redemption of the body (Rom. 8 : 23). Sin creates three problems. Because of sin man is guilty, unclean and a slave. Can the guilty prisoner be released or freed from condemnation and at the same time the retributive demands of justice be satisfied? Can the leper be cleansed and made fit to enter the sanctuary? Can the slave be redeemed and set at liberty? In the

gospel each problem is solved. Hence our boast can only be in the Lord. In the book of Leviticus each of these three conditions and their remedy is foreshadowed. In the early chapters provision is made whereby the guilty may be forgiven; then in the central chapters provision for the unclean to be cleansed, and in the closing chapters for the poor slave to be redeemed through the kinsman-redeemer. The Old Testament title Jehovah is again applied to the Lord Jesus, an important acknowledgement of His Godhood (v. 31).

“And I, brethren, . . .” (2 : 1-5). The apostle’s example. The service of the apostle in Corinth had been very successful. How was it accomplished? In all humility he reviews his preaching whilst with them. He had avoided both oratory and philosophy according to his God-given commission (1 : 17). He had shunned human persuasion and persuasive words. Conscious of his own weakness he was with them in “fear and much trembling”. Did he have any fear as to the sufficiency of the message? That must be ruled out. Was it fear of opposition and persecution such as he had just experienced at Philippi? This may have been so (Acts. 18 : 9-10). But it is best to understand him as referring to the fear that he might descend to the level of the Corinthian orators and depend on human ingenuity, persuasive words and arguments rather than on the only effectual power, that of the Holy Spirit. The demonstration of the Spirit was both convincing, convicting and converting. On the day of Pentecost Peter’s message bore the same hall-marks. Both as to the message (2 : 2) and as to methods to obtain abiding results the apostle’s ministry at Corinth is a pattern for us to follow.

**Christian unity. Contention and its consequences.**  
(1 : 10-4 : 21).

**B. In relation to Christian growth** (2 : 6-3 : 4).

**"Howbeit we speak wisdom . . . . in mystery"** (2 : 6-8).

In the preceding section, as we have seen, the apostle was concerned and burdened with regard to the message of the gospel and its declaration. Now he proceeds to consider his stewardship of the mystery, the "hidden wisdom". He refers to this dual ministry or his dual stewardship in three other epistles. (cf. Rom. 16 : 25; Eph. 3 : 8-9; Col. 1 : 23-26). He says he was "minister of the church" — the mystery. He does not speak of himself as a minister, that is, as one among many, but as one to whom a special stewardship of both had been committed. For succeeding generations and for the Church generally he fulfilled these two in the writing of the epistles to the Romans and Ephesians respectively. In marked contrast to his other epistles he does not associate anyone with him in the writing of these two documents. He states very clearly that the gospel had been the subject of promise and prophecy (Rom. 1 : 1-2; Gal. 3 : 8). But the truth regarding the Church, the union of Jew and Gentile in one body with the exalted Christ as its head, was a hidden mystery revealed only in New Testament times.

**"But as it is written, eye hath not seen . . ."** (2 : 9-10).

This is a citation of the substance of Isa. 64 : 4, with which the words of Ezek. 40 : 4 should be compared. "Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee . . .". The truth relative to the mystery then was not the subject of O.T. prophecy but of N.T. revelation. The words "the things which God hath prepared" are not to be interpreted as referring to the eternal future, as



sometimes they are at funerals, but to the things which are **now** revealed by the Spirit. In His final message to the disciples in the upper room the Lord said: "I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into **all** the truth" (John 16:12-13). This assures us that in the N.T. we have the whole truth, the completed revelation of the mind of God. The expression "the deep things of God" is to be equated with the "hidden wisdom", the "mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (Eph. 3:9).

In Rev. 2:24 we read of "the deep things of Satan", a reference to the Satanic counterfeit of the true Church. (For a fuller exposition of this see the author's book "The Lord and the Churches".) This true wisdom the apostle declared and taught among those he refers to as "perfect", those who were spiritually mature. While such maturity is essential to an appreciative understanding of the truth regarding the mystery, it is not to be thought that the apostle is referring to some secret to be hidden from the rank and file of Christians and taught only to the initiates. All the truth of God is for all the children of God. However, it is possible that by the use of the word "perfect" he was giving a veiled rebuke to the Corinthians for their immaturity, this he does strongly and sharply in chapter 3:1-5.

In this section the apostle follows a common practice of teaching by contrasts. The words "not . . . but" should be noted (2:4; 2:5-6; 9-10; 3:2). Along with the contrast between the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God, we read of the princes of this world, which are coming to naught, their glory being temporary and transient, and the Lord of Glory, whose glory is eternal. This is possibly the highest title applied to Christ in the epistle (cf. Acts 7:2. The God of Glory).

**“The things of God knoweth no man . . .” (2:11-16).** In these verses emphasis is laid upon the Spirit’s ministry. Note the seven references to the Spirit in ch. 2. There is an impassable chasm between man and beast. In contrast to the beast, man has been endowed with a spirit, therefore beasts cannot know that which pertains to man. But there is a vastly greater canyon between man and God. Hence no man knows the things of God. Man by wisdom cannot find out God. Hence we are totally dependent on the Spirit of God, not only for effective gospel preaching (v. 4-5) but to know or apprehend the things of God. The words of v. 11 should be compared with the words of the Lord as recorded in Matt. 11:27, “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son . . . .”. The comparison drawn between the spirit of man in relation to man, and the Spirit of God in relation to God establishes the unity and triunity of the Godhead, and also the deity and equality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. The verse may also be taken as proof text for the personality of the Spirit. He is able to penetrate the “deep things of God”. Clearly then He is omniscient and equal with the Father and the Son.

In v. 10 we have “revelation” by the Spirit. Things which man could never have known or discovered have been revealed to us in the Scriptures through the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:5). As the Scriptures are now complete, there can be no further revelation; hence there can be no prophets.

In v. 12 we have “illumination” by the Spirit. As the word “we” is emphatic it must have a special reference to the apostles. Thereby they were given the capacity to understand what God had revealed to them so that they could expound and teach them. This is in contrast

to what is stated of the prophets in the O.T. They had to seek diligently for the meaning of what they had given utterance to (1 Pet. 1:10-12). However, it is true that every believer has been made the recipient of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is the seal and earnest of the believer's salvation (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5).

In v. 13 we have "inspiration". The words used to convey the truth revealed were divinely chosen. There is a "form of sound words" which we are to "hold fast". While revelation and inspiration are limited to the apostles, illumination is not. We may seek and know the illumination of the Spirit upon the truth already revealed. The spirit of the world referred to is the self-sufficient independent spirit which is in marked contrast to the spirit of the true disciple, the learner of Isa. 50:4-5. The Lord's exhortation is "learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). A similar construction to that of v. 12 is used by the apostle in Rom. 8:17, "ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father"; and also in 2 Tim. 1:7, "We have not received the spirit of cowardice, but of power . . .". These three verses put together show that we have been made the recipients of the Spirit for a three-fold purpose, that we might know, and pray, and witness.

**"The natural man . . ."** (v. 14). This refers to man in his unconverted state, dominated or controlled by the soul, unrenewed and not illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus is a striking example. He could not understand the teaching of the Lord as to the new birth, being born of the Spirit. He was morally upright and was recognized as the teacher of Israel, but was

completely bereft of spiritual life and understanding. "Having the understanding darkened" (Eph. 4:18) man cannot understand the "things of the Spirit of God . . .". The book of Ecclesiastes is the divinely given commentary on the natural man, his pursuits, pleasures and problems. His interests are all "under the sun" and therefore in time. Consequently he hates death as it will cut him off from the sphere where his treasure is. He seeks satisfaction in worldly pleasure, worldly wisdom, worldly wealth and worldly religion, and ends up finding them all a vacuum, and wails his lament "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." He does not welcome spiritual things. They are foolishness to him. In the light of this, v. 13 may be understood as "teaching spiritual things to spiritually minded men, i.e., to those who possess the Spirit. Or it may mean interpreting spiritual truth in spiritual language, or communicating spiritual things by spiritual means as it is translated by J.N.D.

**"He that is spiritual"** (v. 15). Similar expressions are used elsewhere by the apostle. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:7). "He that thinketh himself a prophet or spiritual . . . let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). "If any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one . . ." (Gal. 6:1). Put together these give a portrait of a balanced spiritual believer. He is possessed of spiritual discernment and is able to discern or judge all things from a spiritual angle. In the light of the context, and especially of the contrast in 3:1, it would seem that the spiritual in Corinth (illustrated in the house of Chloe) discerned the error of division and contention, and by not being involved in them or being associated with them he was judged of no man. It may

be, however, that the phrase is to be understood as applying to discernment of things in a wider sphere. Often times the natural man cannot understand the motives and principles which activate the spiritual man. He exhorts Christians to exercise self-examination (11:17), and the prophets to submit to the judgment of others (14:29), and he commends the assembly to exercise disciplinary judgment (5:3-13). But he insists that he himself is responsible to the Lord alone (4:3-4).

**“For who hath known . . .”** (v. 16). This is a quotation from Isa. 40:13. It is also quoted in Rom. 11:34. In essence it is almost a restatement of v. 11. The natural man cannot know the mind of the Lord, but the spiritual possesses the mind of Christ, he possesses the faculty of knowing the mind of Christ. As it is stated that the word “we” is emphatic, we do well to remember that having the “mind of Christ” is only true of those who like the apostle are truly spiritually minded. It was true of the carnally minded Corinthians.

The application of the words of Isa. 4:13 to Christ is another testimony to his Godhood. As the natural man is portrayed for us in the book of Ecclesiastes, so the characteristics of the truly spiritual man are delineated for us in the apostle’s spiritual autobiography in the epistle to the Philippians.

**“And I, brethren, could not . . .”** (3:1-4). In drawing this section to a close he shows the effect of envy and strife upon the Christians, and he reverts to the period of his ministry among them in a similar way to that in ch. 2:1-5. He had not been able to speak to them as unto spiritual. During the 18 months he had been with them he had fed them with food suitable to babes in Christ, such as they were. Since then they seemed to



have made little or no progress. They were like retarded children, very difficult to teach. In these verses the apostle diagnoses their spiritual state and points out four symptoms or evidence of their carnality :

1. Their inability to assimilate solid food, which means a lack of spiritual understanding to apprehend anything but the simplest of Christian truth, and that in a diluted form. They could not enter into the truth of the "mystery" (2 : 7).
2. Their lack of spiritual growth — "neither yet now are ye able". They were spiritual dwarfs or pygmies, very underdeveloped.
3. "They walked as men", that is, they manifested by their envy and strife that they were under the dominion of their fleshly nature.
4. They made party leaders of the servants of God. In this they followed the world in the way it boasts in the founders of the various schools of thought.

The first two are negative, and the last two are positive. "Where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work (Jas. 3 : 16). In the history of Israel there is a very clear example of the way envy and strife work. In Judges 8 we have the record of the envy of Ephraim because of the choice of Gideon, who was of the tribe of Manasseh, rather than a man from their tribe — Judah. They did not like to take the second place. In ch. 12 it manifested itself again, and ended in civil war when thousands of Ephraim died. In the days of Rehoboam, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite, led a division and formed the northern kingdom with disastrous consequences. When the Lord returns in power and great glory and will be recognized

by the nation as their Messiah we are told that the envy of Ephraim will depart (Isa. 11 : 13).

**Christian Unity. Contention and its Consequences :**  
(1 : 10-4 : 21).

**C. In relation to Christian service (3 : 5-4 : 21) :**

The apostle has already shown how a contentious partisan spirit affects the gospel and the saints. It clouded the message and hindered the growth of the believers. Now he proceeds to discuss it from the viewpoint of its effect on all service and more especially for those who take the position of leadership as workers. When Midian (which means strife) attacked Israel they destroyed all the produce. They left no sustenance for the sheep, the ox, or the ass. These three animals serve to illustrate the three groups affected by the strife in Corinth, or by sectarian strife anywhere. The sheep represents the Christian, the ox the servant, and as the foal of an ass had to be redeemed by a lamb being sacrificed, it represents the sinner.

“What then is Apollos?” (RV) (3 : 5-9a). In this section servants are viewed as “God’s fellow-workers” and the assembly as “God’s vineyard”. As the Corinthians were puffed for one against another (4 : 6), the apostle commences with a question, “What then is Apollos, and what is Paul?” He wisely leaves out Peter as there is no record of Peter ever having been in Corinth. Paul had planted and Apollos had watered, so their ministry was complementary, and there was complete harmony between them. They were one in their aim and desire. Many speak of watering the seed with their prayers, but that is not the case. It is ministry whether to the individual (Isa. 55 : 10-11; 58 : 10-11) or to the assembly.

As such it would be a refreshing ministry. Spurgeon spoke of the difference between irrigation and inundation. The one is productive, the other destructive. Instead of Who is Paul? as in the A.V., the R.V. asks What then is Paul? There is nothing personally derogatory in the question. It is upon their function and place in the whole scheme of the work that the apostle wishes to focus our attention. They are but servants, ministers or deacons as the word is. As it was God that gave the increase, he that planted and he that watered were very secondary in importance. The apostle wishes to have their eyes turned away from man to God. Like the blind man who needed a second touch of the Lord's hands, because he saw men as trees walking, the Corinthians seemed to have a distorted view of their leaders. In ch. 1 : 27 and 2 : 10 the apostle had used the same two words "But God" in connection with election and revelation. Now benediction must come from the only possible source — God and God alone. Paul and Apollos were God's fellow-workers. Paul speaks of Timothy, Titus, Marcus and others in the same way. It portrays an ideal fellowship in service. Paul's planting is recorded in Acts 18 : 1-18 and Apollos's watering in Acts 18 : 27. Each one is assured of his own wage according to his own labour. The difference in their work will be recognized by the Lord.

"Ye are God's building . . ." (9b-11). The apostle changes the metaphor. The assembly is now viewed as a building, and later more specifically as a temple. In this paragraph the name of Apollos is not mentioned. A wider sphere is introduced including the responsible leaders at Corinth. It was the leaders of Israel that Peter addressed as the "builders" (Acts 4 : 11). There may be an indirect reference to some Judaizing teachers, possibly



the Peter party, who questioned Paul's apostleship. Paul very emphatically states that as a wise master-builder, a wise architect, he had laid the foundation. This was due to the grace given to him, the grace that made him an apostle. There is a note of warning in the words: "No other foundation can any man lay, but that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The foundation referred to is the foundation of the assembly at Corinth. The foundation of the Church was laid historically at the Cross, doctrinally by the apostles and prophets (1 Pet. 2:6; Eph. 2:20). In Rom. 15:28 Paul speaks of his policy of not building on any other man's foundation. It is in this sense that he uses the word in the passage in Corinthians. This was laid by his preaching. It was a foundation based on doctrine, a doctrinal foundation. And as he insists that it is the only foundation that can be laid, it is important to take note of what he records as to his preaching in Corinth. The one foundation, he says, is Jesus Christ, but in the two epistles this is amplified and he tells us what the four corner stones of the building were.

1. **"The Son of God, who was preached among you by us . . ."** (2 Cor. 1:19). This was evidently the first note that he preached in the synagogue, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. Immediately after his conversion he preached that "Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). As he commences his exposition of the gospel in the epistle to the Romans he affirms that Jesus Christ has been powerfully declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection (Rom. 1:1-4). There must be no equivocation with regard to this truth.

2. **The Cross.** "I determined not to know anything

among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). The gospel which he preached was the message of the Cross (1 Cor. 1:18).

3. **Christ risen from the dead.** Their trumpet gave no uncertain sound as to this.
4. **The Lordship of Christ** (2 Cor. 4:5). "We preach . . . Christ Jesus the Lord."

With such foundation we gladly sing,

"On Christ the solid rock I stand.

All other ground is sinking sand."

"**Now if any man build . . .**" (vs. 12-13). While no other foundation may be laid, the materials used in the building may vary. The six materials naturally divide into two groups, the imperishable and the perishable. The following differences may be noted in connection with building with the two kinds of materials. There is a vast difference in their **cost**. The first three are very expensive, while the others are cheap. There is also a difference in their **character**. Man cannot manufacture the first three, whereas the others are the product of nature. They represent that which man can produce. Then again there is a great difference in their **construction**. Building with costly stones is slow and tedious, whereas a wooden structure with small bales of grass for walls and straw for a roof can be erected in a very short time. Then the vital difference is in their combustibility. Fire cannot affect the one, whereas it will quickly reduce the other to a handful of ashes.

The materials cannot be taken to represent persons, saved or unsaved, as persons will not be subject to the fire. As the foundation is the doctrine concerning the person and redemptive work of Christ, so by analogy, the

materials represent ministry, that which is intended to edify, to build up the assembly. That which corresponds to the first three is costly, sacrificial and time-absorbing in its preparation, whereas that which corresponds to the second group is not costly and fails to build that which is permanent and abiding.

The "day" referred to is the "day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:8). It refers to the judgment seat of Christ. That day will make clear what is obscure in the night, the present period (Rom. 14:12). Not only will the day make it evident, but the fire will test its character, for each man's work will be tested by the Word of God which is "as a fire" (Jer. 23:29) and by the eyes of the Lord which are "as a flame of fire" (Rev. 1:14). It is important to note that it is not the salvation of the individual that is in question, but the character of his work.

**"If any man's work abide . . ."** (vs. 14-15). Two kinds of workmen are here envisaged. The one who builds according to the Word (comp. Ex. 39:42-43) will receive a reward. The other though building on the right foundation will see his work reduced to ashes, but that will not affect his salvation. There is nothing in the verse to suggest any purgatorial cleansing of the individual.

**"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God . . ."** (v. 16). For similar appeals see 5:6; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:23, 24, and compare Rom. 6:16; 11:2. "The verb is 'oida', to know by perception or observation. The appeal is to a fact which should have been obvious to the readers." (W. E. Vine). The "temple of God" here referred to is the assembly rather than the individual as in 6:19. The word "temple" is the word for the holiest of all, the sanctuary, the dwelling place of the Shekinah

glory. Even so the Spirit dwells in the assembly and is to preside over its worship and ministry.

**"If any man defile . . ."** (v. 17). The word rendered "defiled" is the same as the one translated "destroyed" in the same verse, and "corrupted" in 2 Cor. 11:3. The words may refer to a deceiver as suggested in the words "Let no man deceive himself" and "be not deceived" (6:9). He would defile the sanctuary by wrong doctrine as in 15:12, 33. But in Israel uncleanness on the part of an individual would defile the sanctuary. If an Israelite failed to avail himself of the provision for cleansing he would defile the sanctuary (Num. 19:13, 20). For illustration see 2 Chron. 29:16-17; Neh. 13:4-9. In this way the man living in sin in Corinth was defiling the assembly and came under the disciplinary hand of the Lord. See ch. 5, also 11:30.

**"Let no man deceive himself . . ."** (vs. 18-20). These two verses are a warning to those who were evidently the leaders in the partisan strife in the assembly. The words are almost an echo of the words of Prov. 3:7, "Be not wise in thine own eyes", and of Isa. 5:21, "Woe to them who are wise in their own eyes". Carnal wisdom and carnal methods used to bring about their own ends and purposes in relation to party strife and factiousness is the sure road to disaster. The two quotations are from Job. 5:13 and Ps. 94:11. The words "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" applies the teaching of 1:20-25 to the subject of Christian ministry. But in ch. 1 it is their relation to the gospel that is in view.

**"Therefore let no man glory in men . . ."** (vs. 21-22). This is a note of warning to the assembly with regard to making men leaders of a party or becoming the devotees

of one preacher or teacher, just like the princes of Reuben incited Korah to rebel against Moses (Num. 16:1-3). Servants are not to control the assemblies. All the servants of God are for all. They were not to be limited to the ministry of one or the other. "All things are yours", that is for our spiritual good and blessing, even the five things mentioned, strange as it may seem to think of them as servants.

"Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's . . ." (v. 23). They all belonged to Christ, and if this was realized it would deal a death blow to party strife and sectarianism or denominationalism, or following human leaders. Christ is God's, that is, He is God's servant. This is later referred to in 11:3 and 15:28. The epistle emphasizes both the deity and the humanity of the Lord. The Lord's servant character did not cease with His ascension.

"Let a man so account of us . . ." (4:1-5). From this portion it is evident that some of the party leaders in Corinth were antagonistic to Paul. This faction became more assertive and is referred to more at length in the second epistle. They sat in judgment on the apostle (v. 3), and prided themselves in thinking that Paul would not pay another visit to Corinth.

Paul had already spoken of service for God as "deacon" work, as "planting", as "labouring", as "building", and of himself as an "architect". Now he uses two other terms or metaphors.

1. "Ministers of Christ", not the word for a deacon, but an under-rower, or an official servant working under another's directions.

2. "Stewards of the mysteries of God". This is suggestive of a position of responsibility comparable to



that of the Levites who were to keep "the charge of the tabernacle of testimony" (Num. 1:33). Such a responsible service demands faithfulness as usually the work of a steward is not supervised, although, of course, he has to give account to his master (Lk. 16:1-12). Unfaithfulness on the part of the steward resulted in his removal from the stewardship. With this parable in mind the apostle Peter urges the necessity of being "good stewards" (1 Pet. 4:10).

"The mysteries of God" could embrace all the truths connected with the gospel, but more probably may be limited to the things specifically designated as mysteries in the N.T., as for example the great mystery of "godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16); the mystery of Israel's partial blindness (Rom. 11:25); the great mystery of "Christ and the Church" (Eph. 5:32); the mystery that we shall not all die, but we shall be changed or transformed and translated at the parousia (1 Cor. 15:50-51; 1 Thess. 4:13-17).

As there were those in Corinth who passed judgment on the apostle he boldly asserts that he knew nothing against himself, he had a perfectly clear conscience, but he acknowledges that his conscience is not the final arbiter or adjudicator. The omniscient Lord was the judge. As he lived in the light of the judgment seat of Christ he considered it a small matter to be cross-examined at some tribunal set up by them, or judged according to the principles or standards by which men govern or judge in this day — "man's day", an expression used here only. It denotes the period during which world government has been put into man's hands. It is destined to end in failure and a complete collapse at the consummation of this age and the manifestation of the Lord in power and great glory, ushering in the day of the Lord.

But Paul is more concerned with the contrast between "man's day" with its tribunals and the "day of Christ", "the day shall declare it" (3:13). Whereas according to ch. 3:12-14 each man's work is to be made manifest, according to ch. 4:4-5 the Lord will bring to light and "make manifest the counsels of the hearts", the secret hidden counsels that have been the motive springs of the service rendered, as also of the strife and factions so prevalent in Corinth and since in all places. The only commendation the apostle considered worth-while is that which will come from the Lord, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

"And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred . . ." (4:6-7). The apostle had used his name and that of Apollos as illustration and he had purposely used these varied terms to describe their service and its character so that they might apply them to themselves and the circumstances prevailing in Corinth. Thereby they would be guarded against putting the servants of God on a pedestal higher than what is accorded to them in the Scriptures. It is noteworthy that the word "priest" is not found amongst them. It is never used in the N.T. to denote a servant of Christ. The apostle does not quote any Scripture, the words "what is written" are to be understood as referring to what Paul himself had said regarding servants and their service. Consequently anyone who had been fitted for service should remember that he owes all to the grace of God. This leaves no room for boasting. The questions of v. 7 very effectually puncture and deflate all forms of pride.

"Now ye are full . . ." (4:8-10). As his beloved children he warned them in very sharp tones and incisive words. They possibly are the sharpest in the epistle. The words are almost an echo of those spoken to Israel



by Moses in the plains of Moab. In the wilderness they had been pilgrims dependent on the Lord for their daily supply of manna. Soon they were to enter the land and their circumstances would be completely changed. They would occupy houses, oliveyards, vineyards and would have food in abundance. Hence the warning, "When you shall be full, beware lest you forget God." (Deut. 6:10-12). This warning was repeated with some added precautions in 8:10-14. With prosperity and affluence they would be faced with new temptations. The words "ye have reigned as kings" are a reminder of the fable of Jotham (Jud. 9:8-10). The olive tree could not produce the oil for the sanctuary and wear a crown, neither could the fig tree produce figs and wear a crown, nor could the vine produce grapes if it accepted the crown. But the bramble bush gladly accepted the honour. It could grow thorns as well as wear a crown. This fable is a graphic picture of a life dominated by the flesh, or of an assembly under carnal rules.

The words "ye are full, ye are rich . . ." are very similar to the words addressed later by the Lord to the assembly at Laodicea. The Corinthians had reigned as kings, they had evidently become somewhat affluent, but the words "without us" suggest that they had no thought for the apostle or the furtherance of the gospel.

Six words are used in vs. 8-10 to describe the spiritual state of the Corinthians, "Ye are full . . . rich . . . reigned as kings . . . wise . . . strong . . . honourable". They had acknowledged the world and were honoured by it. The words are strongly ironical. Then the apostle gives six contrasting figures to describe his state.

1. "God has set us . . . last", to be illtreated as

Jeremiah the last prophet before the captivity was. Theirs was the lowest place.

2. "appointed to death . . ." like condemned criminals. In these words the apostle draws upon the gladiatorial contests for his illustration. At those contests, condemned criminals were the last to be called. They were given the opportunity to fight for their lives either with armed swordsmen or with beasts. Such contests were witnessed by large companies. Paul likens the apostles to such criminals. All the odds were against them.

3. To the theatre itself, with the universe, both angels and men, looking on, they were a spectacle, a "gazing-stock" (Heb. 10 : 33). The amphitheatre in Ephesus was a large one (Acts 19 : 29). It is now very dilapidated, as Ephesus is a complete ruin with only a caretaker's hut in its centre.

4. "Fools", compare Acts 17 : 18 and 26 : 24 where he is called a babbler, and mad. He and his fellow-workers were considered fools because of the way they lived and suffered.

5. "Weak", compare 2 Cor. 10 : 10, "in bodily presence weak". Then again he voluntarily refrained from exercising his apostolic authority.

6. "Despised". They were like slaves who had been deprived of their citizenship rights.

"Even to this present hour . . ." (4 : 11-14). These verses are an up-to-the-moment bulletin on the apostle's experience at Ephesus. The extreme poverty, privation and persecution were a duplication of the Lord's experience. (cf. Matt. 5 : 44; 26 : 67; 1 Pet. 2 : 23). The last two ways in which he says they were treated shows that they were

regarded as the very vilest of men, the "filth and off-scouring" (Lam. 3 : 45), the refuse of a sacrifice, just as the Greeks at the time of a plague would throw some wretch into the sea to appease the gods.

**"Be ye imitators of me . . ."** (4 : 15-21). This is the final appeal. The Corinthians were fond of imitating the culture of Athens, so he exhorts them to follow or imitate him as their spiritual father. The fact that he could do so is an example to all true servants. Their many instructors were just pedagogues, child-trainers (cf. Gal. 4 : 1-3). The longer they remained in their infant state the better for the pedagogue. In his care for them the apostle would send Timothy, and he himself hoped to come to them in the will of the Lord, an important proviso. When he would come to Corinth he would know more about those who were inflated, "puffed up" with the leaven of pride.

**"The kingdom of God . . ."** (4 : 20). This is an echo of the rebuke in v. 8. This phrase is used in a twofold way. In this verse and in Rom. 12 : 7 it refers to the kingdom of God as a present spiritual reality. But in chs. 6 : 9 and 15 : 24, 50 it refers to the future Messianic or millennial kingdom of the Son of Man.

**"What will ye?"** (4 : 21). He hoped that they would react in a spiritual way to his ministry and to his envoy so that he could visit them with joy.

### 3. The Christian Assembly and its sanctity : (5 : 1 — 6 : 11).

#### A. In its relation to God (5 : 1-13).—Holiness.

**"It is reported commonly . . ."** (vs. 1-2). Quite abruptly the apostle proceeds to deal with a very serious case of moral failure. It was a flagrant breach of the moral code.

It was fornication of a most serious character, and was evidently well-known among them and condoned. It was not one of the many subjects which the assembly had written about to him, but he may have learnt more regarding it from the three men who had come to see him and had evidently brought the letter. But the assembly had not been grieved by the sin and had therefore not taken any action. One might have expected the apostle to have dealt with this serious problem first, but without unity in the assembly it would have been impossible to deal with the offender, and there would be no purity. The sin was the sin of Reuben (Gen. 35 : 22) and the sin of Absalom (2 Sam. 16 : 22). It was something that was not even tolerated among the Greeks, lax as Corinth was in its morals. They were even "puffed up", possibly boasting in a false liberty under grace. Note the other references to being "puffed up" (4 : 6, 19; 18; 1; 13 : 4 cf. Prov. 28 : 25). For this the apostle rebukes them. Their attitude to the sin reflected their carnality and spiritual pride. In ch. 6 : 9 the apostle warns, "Be not deceived . . . fornicators . . . shall not inherit the kingdom of God." It would seem that some deceiver was at work turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, into an opportunity to gratify the flesh. Liberty became licence. It is quite within the range of possibility that the man involved was himself considered a leader among them, a party leader. A flagrant example of such a case was much publicized in the press a few years ago. The passage shows how solemnly the apostle viewed such sin. Just as the leper was to be put out of the camp in Israel (Num. 5 : 1-4) for the sake of the safety of the camp, so severe disciplinary action is absolutely necessary in such cases as this in order to preserve the spiritual health of the assembly. The assembly is the place where "God's

honour dwelleth" (Ps. 26 : 8). It is the "temple of God" (3 : 16). As sin of this character is defiling it must be dealt with, even as a person's leg or arm must be amputated at times to save the individual's life. The sin was definitely prohibited in the law, and was to be judged. A curse was pronounced on anyone guilty of it (Lev. 18 : 8; Deut. 22 : 20; 27 : 20; Amos. 2 : 7 cf. Ezra. 9 : 1; 10 : 6). Had the assembly mourned, the guilty man would have been "taken away" from among them. This may be understood as the result of an action taken by the assembly, or alternatively by God as in Acts 5 : 1-5. The latter sense would seem the more likely. An assembly in such cases needs to take the place and position of the poor widow in the parable of Luke 18 : 1-3 and cry, "Avenge me of mine adversary."

"I have judged . . ." (5 : 3-5). In these verses the apostle gives his verdict and the punishment to be meted out. In keeping with the principle stated in 3 : 17 that he who defiles the temple of God would receive judgment in kind, the apostle decreed that the guilty man should be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. This may either be the destruction of the fleshly lusts or of the flesh viewed physically. If the former, then some form of bodily sickness would be involved which would deprive the person of the ability to indulge his fleshly nature. The latter, however, is the more acceptable. In that case the words, "for the destruction of the flesh" are akin to passing the death penalty on the man. The sin was so serious that only death would satisfactorily resolve the problem and vindicate the holiness of God, and it would thereby be an object lesson to the assembly. As an illustration of the first suggested interpretation the judgment passed on the adulterous wife in Numbers ch. 5 might be considered. By her bodily affliction she became



an object of shame in the camp. An assembly gathered for the special purpose of exercising discipline should be a very solemn one, a court scene, with the apostle present in spirit, and the Lord Jesus Christ in power. In the name of, or with the authority of the Lord Jesus the judgment would be pronounced and carried into effect. The words "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" show that the punishment did not affect the matter of his eternal salvation. But the words make it difficult to believe that the discipline was with a view to his restoration. It is often thought that the man referred to in 2 Cor. 2:5-10 is the same man. This is very doubtful. The evidence would seem to be to the contrary.

"Your glorying is not good . . ." (5:4-8). The sharp rebuke regarding their boasting being not good would suggest that they were even proud of their tolerance of the man and his incestuous act, his licentious life. Some of them might have thought that it was an emancipation from the restrictions imposed by the law. Paul reminds them that purging the "old leaven" was essential, and that it only takes a little leaven to leaven the whole lump, or to corrupt the whole community. The comparison of the sin to leaven confirms the view that in the Scriptures leaven invariably illustrates the effect of evil, working silently and surreptitiously. Here it is moral evil. In Gal. 5:9 it is doctrinal evil. Not only must the man be excommunicated but all moral laxity must be judged, otherwise the whole assembly would become contaminated by such corrupt practices. The evil example would be followed by others. "In Christ" they were positionally said to be unleavened, even as Israel was represented by the 12 unleavened cakes on the table of shewbread. If their life and practice was to correspond with this,

they would have to purge themselves of the "old leaven". Only thereby would they become a "new lump". The Israelites were commanded to remove all leaven from their houses at the passover season. The first dough they would make after that would be unleavened, it would be a "new lump". This is the imagery from which the apostle draws his instruction.

"Christ our passover . . ." (v. 7). This is one of the many ways in which Christ is referred to in the epistle. In 3:10-11 He is the foundation. In 10:4 He is the rock, and in 15:20 He is the firstfruits. There are others. It is a suggestive line for study and for ministry.

The application of the passover to Christ shows the importance of the study of O.T. typology. The old contains the new and the new explains the old. Connected with the passover was the feast of unleavened bread. Recognizing its typical significance the apostle applies it to the Christian life in the words "Let us keep festival". The Christian life is thus viewed as a festival. (Elsewhere in the epistle it is viewed as a /race and a conflict). Leaven in all its forms must be put away, whether it be the old leaven, or the leaven of malice and wickedness, or the leaven of the Pharisees, or of the Sadducees, or of Herod (Mt. 16:6; Lk. 12:1; Mk. 8:15). The measure of the believer's joy in the Lord and in His redemption will be the measure in which he observes the injunction to put away leaven. This is true both individually and collectively. In the instructions regarding the feast of unleavened bread we do well to note that no leavened bread was to be eaten (Ex. 12:20); no leaven or leavened bread was to be seen in their houses or in all their quarters (Ex. 12:15, 13:7). Moreover unleavened bread was to be eaten (Ex. 12:15;



13:6-7). The believer should not be satisfied with abstaining from that which is evil; he should feed on Christ, the true bread of God, the one in whom there was no sin. There should be a positive Christian testimony, not merely a negative one. (For a full exposition of the festivals and their significance, see the author's "The Jewish Festivals and their prophetic significance").

**"The unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."** (5:8). This refers to the life of the believer — its positive character. There should be sincerity of heart and purity of motive. There should be no attempt to cover a flaw with wax, such as was commonly done with marble statues. It should be capable of being tested in the sunlight and found flawless. All this is involved in the meaning of the word translated "sincere". The portion has no reference to the Lord's supper.

The passover and the feast of unleavened bread were inseparably bound together, so much so that they were practically viewed as one. Similarly, what they typify or foreshadow, redemption and sanctification are inseparably joined together in the N.T., even as the altar and the laver were associated in the tabernacle.

**"I wrote unto you . . ."** (5:9-13). In this connection the apostle refers to a letter written previously, concerning the contents and purport of which there seemed to have been some misunderstanding. This letter is not now in our possession. The suggestion that the apostle is referring to what he was then writing is negated by the words "in my epistle" and by the explanatory words which follow. These would seem to be an explanation of what he had written. Even social fellowship with one who is called a brother is forbidden if he is guilty

of the sins listed in v. 11. But "those that are without" is a phrase indicative of the unconverted (cf. Mk. 3:11; Col. 4:5; 1 Thess. 4:14). God will judge them. It is not within the sphere of the responsibility and prerogative of the Christian assembly to pass judgment on them. Evidently the woman involved was of this company, or she would have come under the same disciplinary action as the man. The man is referred to as a wicked person, and they are told to remove him from the fellowship of the assembly (cf. Deut. 13:15; 17:7). That was the limit of their responsibility. It needed apostolic authority to deliver such an one to Satan. Only in one other instance do we read of a similar action. There the evil was doctrinal (1 Tim. 1:20). As the world is the realm where Satan rules, it may be claimed that by excommunicating the man he was automatically brought under Satan's power. Satan can only touch the believer by the permissive will of God (cf. Job and Paul's thorn in the flesh). The man in Gal. 6:1 should not be treated according to the instructions in this chapter.

**The Christian Assembly and its sanctity: (5:1-6:11).**

**B. In relation to one another (6:1-11) — Righteousness.**

"Dare any of you . . ." (1-11). Practical righteousness. In ch. 5 the apostle had rebuked them strongly for not recognizing the holiness which becomes the house of God (Ps. 93:5). In ch. 6:1-11 emphasis is laid upon the righteousness which should characterize the people of God in their dealings with one another. In some unspecified way they had actually been defrauding even their brethren. This is not to suggest that it is correct to defraud others. But brethren in Christ should have a special care for each other's interest and welfare. To

right the wrongs experienced at the hands of their brethren, some had filed law-suits and that before a Roman or world court. Irrespective of whatever the verdict would be, this in itself was a fault, a defeat, and a serious failure. In condemning their action the apostle urges that such matters should be dealt with before the brethren. The term "unjust" (v. 1) is to be understood as synonymous with "unbelievers" (v. 6). There is no suggestion that of necessity the verdict of the court would be unjust, though justice is often sacrificed in such places. Saints are to judge the world (cf. Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:25-30; Dan. 7:22), and they were to judge angels (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4 & Jude. 6). Hence should they be thought unworthy to judge matters which at best are but trivial in comparison? When read in conjunction with v. 5 two courses are open to the wronged believer. He may bring it before the brethren for them to judge, or he may suffer the wrong and commit the matter into the Lord's hands to await His verdict. In this connection they are solemnly warned not to be deceived. The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, for righteousness is one of the features of that kingdom (Rom. 12:17). The sins mentioned in v. 9 are personal and social, sexual vice, along with idolatry. The fact that so many are mentioned is indicative of the morally corrupt atmosphere prevailing in Corinth, but a comparison with Romans 1:19-32 and Col. 3:5-7 shows that both the Roman and Greek civilization were morally bankrupt. They could not have become more degraded. The sins listed in v. 10 are those committed against others, and the apostle repeats the statement that such shall not inherit the kingdom of God (cf. Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:5). Moral rectitude must be insisted upon as a proof of the genuineness of the profession of Christian experience,

even as the keeping of the feast of unleavened bread was to be as a sign upon the hand and a memorial between the eyes (Ex. 13:9). It was to be an evidence to themselves (hands), and to others (between the eyes).

The effectiveness of the gospel in Corinth is shown in v. 11. The lives of some of them had been such as is described in vs. 9-10, but they had been revolutionized and transformed by the dynamic of the gospel. They had been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus;; sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and washed. The verbs "justified" and "sanctified" are in the passive voice, but the verb "washed" is in the middle voice. They had got themselves washed. It was something which they had taken an interest in, and responsibility for. A comparison with Acts 22:16 ("Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.") would lead to the conclusion that the apostle here is referring to the fact that at their baptism they had publicly professed that they had renounced their past life. Baptism is therefore not only an act wherein the individual confesses Christ as Lord (Acts 10:48), and symbolizes his identification with Christ in burial (Rom. 6:4-5), but also an act symbolizing his renunciation of his past life (c. Deut. 21:1-6). Being sanctified by the Spirit may refer to His initial work of setting the believer apart, or it may refer to what is specifically stated in v. 19, the believer's body being constituted His temple (cf. Ex. 29:43). The title used of the Holy Spirit here is not used elsewhere. The verse illustrates how the doctrine of the trinity is woven into the warp and woof of the epistle.

The two words "sanctified" and "justified" focus attention on the two aspects of the Christian life emphasized

in this section, the practical holiness which should characterize the assembly (ch. 5), and the practical righteousness that should be the hall-mark of the Christian's conduct in relation to others (ch. 6 : 1-11). The sins mentioned in v. 9 are unclean. They are a negation of holiness, whereas the sins mentioned in v. 10 are in conflict with righteousness. In the Psalms great emphasis is laid upon these two aspects of the divine life. We read that "holiness becometh Thine house" and of "the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 93 : 5 ; 29 : 2); we read of the "sacrifices of righteousness" and of "the paths of righteousness" (Ps. 4 : 5; 23 : 3), (cf. Phil. 1 : 11; Heb. 12 : 11, the "fruits of righteousness"). But these are but a few samples.

#### 4. The Christian Assembly and personal liberty : (6 : 12-11 : 1).

While the apostle continues to exhort to practical holiness of life in this section, he does it in the context of another question which was assuming dangerous dimensions in the assembly at Corinth, the problem of Christian liberty. There were evidently two groups holding diametrically opposing views relative to the exercise of their liberty. Each seems to have had its maxim or slogan. The libertines had theirs summed up in the four times repeated sentence "All things are lawful for me." This they applied to both foods and fornication. The ascetics on the other hand wished to prohibit marriage and the eating of any food that had been offered to idols, even in the home. In contending with these two opposing factions the apostle does not meet them in a head-on collision course. He partially agrees with each and then introduces qualifying clauses which very effectively neutralize their error.



The chiasmic structure or the introverted character of the whole section may be set out as follows :

- A. "All things are lawful unto me . . ." (6 : 12). The question of liberty.
- B. "Meats for the belly . . ." (6 : 13a). The question of food, meats offered to idols.
- C. "The body is not for fornication . . ." (6 : 13b-20). The question of fornication. A forbidden sex relationship.
- C. "The body is for the Lord . . ." (7 : 1-40). The question of marriage. A divinely ordained sex relationship.
- B. "Now concerning meats offered to idols" (8 : 1-10 : 22).
- A. "All things are lawful for me . . ." (10 : 23-30). Concluding exhortations ((10 : 31-11 : 1).

The words "All things are lawful for me" were doubtless the slogan bandied about by the libertines. They were prepared to accept the teaching of those who turned the grace of God into an opportunity to gratify the lusts of the flesh. They turned their liberty into licence. (cf. Gal. 5 : 13; Jude 4). It was a perversion of the gospel of the grace of God as taught by the apostle. They claimed that being free from the law and under grace they were free from all ceremonial and moral restraints. The apostle makes a concession with regard to meats, which indicates that what we eat has no moral significance, a confirmation of the teaching of Mk. 7 : 14-23. Later he concedes that the idol is nothing (8 : 4), but he introduces a very important qualifying clause : "All things are not expedient." This he repeats in 10 : 23 (see note).



Whereas what we eat has no moral significance, that is not the case with fornication. It has very serious moral and spiritual implications and significance. There is a marked contrast between the way he speaks of the belly and the body. The one, the channel of sustenance, will be destroyed as being unnecessary. But the body, contrary to their belief will be raised, it has a future. Their failure to apprehend this led to the degrading depths of fornication with the temple prostitutes—"the harlot". The quotation of Gen. 2:24 shows that the sexual union with a harlot was not merely physical. It implies a mental and moral union, and it is a sin against his own body, whereby he is liable to contract venereal disease (cf. Rom. 1:26-27). The many references to the body should be noted. 1. The body is for the Lord; 2. The Lord is for the body; 3. The body is to be raised; 4. The body is a member of Christ; 5. The body is not to be defiled by fornication; 6. The body is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and 7. The believer is to glorify God in his body. (The last sentence of v. 20 is left out in the R.V. and also in J.N.D.'s translation.) The incentives to holiness, or to glorify God in our bodies, seen in the passage should also be noted. It may be helpful to consider them in their reverse order. Thereby we will commence with a reference to the cross, and end with a reference to the resurrection.

1. "Ye are bought with a price . . ." (6:20 cf. 7:23 where the same statement is repeated, but with a different application). It means to acquire by paying a price, to buy in the market place, the agora. The price by which we were bought was His "precious blood" (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18). Therefore we are not our own. We are His purchased property.

2. "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit . . ."

(v. 19). We have been made the recipients of the Spirit by virtue of His death (cf. Rom. 8 : 9, 32).

3. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The union of the believer with Christ is a prominent feature of the teaching of the epistle to the Romans chs. 6-8, and also Col. 2:9-3:4. It is a doctrine of vital importance in the N.T. Leah named one of her sons "Levi", which means joined. It was prophetic for later the tribe became "joined to Aaron in the service of the tabernacle (Num. 18:2-4). Every believer should be a true Levite, serving in the "newness of the Spirit".

4. "Your bodies are members of Christ." (v. 15). The Corinthians did not seem to realize this, hence the question "Know ye not . . . ?" Membership in the body of Christ is considered in ch. 12:12, 27. Here because of the context and the reference to fornication the emphasis is on the body as that which is to be preserved from the defilement of fornication, from which the believer is to flee as did Joseph (Gen. 39:12). The warnings of the book of Proverbs should also be considered (ch. 6:32-33; 7:21-23).

5. ". . . God will also raise up us . . ." (v. 14). This is assured beyond any doubt by the fact that "God hath raised up the Lord". This is discussed at length in ch. 15.

It is instructive to note the apostle's method of counter-acting the error. He gives constructive teaching regarding the body and its place in the scheme or plan of salvation, and he corrects their misapprehension as to the seriousness of the sin by viewing it in the light of their membership in Christ (v. 15); the true nature of such a union (v. 16), and of its effects on their own bodies (v. 18).

## **The Christian Assembly and personal liberty :**

(6 : 12-11 : 1) (Contd.).

### **C. In relation to marriage. (7 : 1-40).**

These things are considered in order by the apostle (see 7 : 25; 8 : 1; 11 : 2; 12 : 1; 16 : 1).

“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me . . .” (7 : 1-7). Having effectively dealt with the question of fornication, and illicit and forbidden sex relationship, the apostle turns to consider the problem posed by the ascetics regarding marriage as stated in the words, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman.” He does not meet them either by a head-on collision. The words “It is good . . .” were in all likelihood a watch-word of the party. It could hardly be a statement of the apostle’s as that would militate against the purpose of God in creation, “Be fruitful and multiply . . .”. The clear teaching of Scripture is that marriage is honourable (Heb. 12 : 4). The marriage union is symbolical of the union of “Christ and the Church” (Eph. 5 : 31-32). In the chapter marriage is viewed from seven different angles.

1. **Viewed in the light of the prevalence of immorality and their incontinency (v. 1-7).** “To avoid fornication let every man have his own wife . . .”. The obligations of the married state are very clearly stated. Christianity does not sanction either polygamy or polyandry (v. 2). Each at the time of marriage assumes as a debt certain obligations to the other (v. 3). Cf. Ex. 21 : 10. Each has his or her conjugal rights. Failure to recognize this is to defraud the other party (v. 4-5). Abstinence from sexual relationship must only be by mutual consent, and that only as a temporary arrangement as a concession

(v. 6), lest they should fall owing to their lack of continency, through some satanic temptation, some snare set by Satan to trip them. The language would almost suggest that some of the ascetics were already married and had wished to refrain from all marital relationships.

By marriage the Christians were preserved from the sin of fornication to which they were so liable because of their incontinency, and their family life would be a witness against the corruption that prevailed. It provided a way whereby children could be born and brought up in a clean atmosphere with a proper outlook on sex and the married state.

However, the apostle acknowledges that for some the unmarried or celibate state had certain advantages. He viewed his continency as a charisma, a gift from God (v. 7). The married state with its privileges of companionship, counsel and parenthood is also a charisma, a gift from God. (cf. Prov. 18 : 22). Celibacy is nowhere enjoined, and it is not suggested that it is in any way superior or holier than the married state.

**2. Viewed in the light of its physical advantage** (v. 8-9). While it is good to remain unmarried, it is better both physically and otherwise to marry than to burn with sexual desire (cf. Rom. 1 : 27 "burned"). The sex instinct or urge is a strong one, divinely implanted, so it must be considered. It is not cancelled by conversion. As widows are mentioned, and virgins are referred to later (v. 25), the "unmarried" would refer to men whether widowed or single.

**3. Viewed in the light of the Lord's teaching.** "Unto the married . . ." (v. 10-11). Paul here bases his command on the recorded teaching of the Lord (Mt. 19 : 1-6;

Mk. 10 : 1-12). In the light of the context in which the Lord gave the teaching it is safe to conclude that the "married" referred to by the apostle are both believers. He allows for the possibility of a lack of compatibility, but he does not regard that as sufficient reason for separation or divorce.

**4. Viewed in the light of the post-marital conversion of either one.** "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord" (v. 12-16). For what he says regarding the problem is not based on any recorded teaching given by the Lord. Nevertheless his teaching is equally authoritative, being inspired by the Spirit. Some matters of importance are brought into focus by the apostle :

- (a) The conversion of either husband or wife does not nullify the marriage. Their status is not changed. The children are not bastards or born out of wedlock.
- (b) The husband is not to put away his wife.
- (c) The wife is not to leave the husband, though in some circumstances in India it would be well nigh impossible for a wife whose husband is an idolater to continue living with him. He would likely send her away.
- (d) If the unbelieving depart, the other is free. However, the extent or measure of this freedom is debated. Is it to be limited to just freedom from responsibility? Or does it allow for liberty to re-marry. To insist that the deserted party remain unmarried would put a yoke on them which they would not likely be able to bear. (cf. vs. 2, 5, 9). nevertheless the believer should make every effort to live peaceably with the other partner. This is a primary responsibility.



- (e) **"The unbelieving is sanctified . . ."** (vs. 14, 16). The words of v. 14 must be read and understood in the light of v. 17. The comparison makes it clear that the sanctification is not to be equated with an experimental salvation. The words of v. 16 encourage the believing partner that he or she might be instrumental in the salvation of the other.

**5. Viewed in the light of their calling** (v. 17-24). The believer is to be faithful to the call of God in whatever sphere of life God in His sovereignty has apportioned him. It is not to be interpreted as suggesting that a believer is never to change his occupation. The necessity and wisdom of abiding in the married state, in which they had been called, leads the apostle to apply the principle to a wider sphere (vs. 20, 24). This is the connection between these verses and the preceding ones. The principle which was to operate in the case of marriage is applied to circumcision (v. 18) and slavery (v. 20). Having been bought with a price he is Christ's servant or slave, and he is to abide faithful to God. If the one who was a slave at the time of his conversion could obtain his freedom, well and good, but he was to remember that he had received a far greater emancipation. He was the Lord's freedman. On the other hand the one who was free at the time of his call was Christ's bondsman. The many occurrences of the word "called" should be noted. They do not refer to an earthly vocation but to the specified time of God's call (cf. Rom. 8 : 28-30). They are exhorted to remain faithful to that call which had brought them from darkness into light (1 Pet. 2 : 9).

**6. Viewed in the light of existing circumstances** (v. 25-38). "The present distress" (v. 26). "Now concerning virgins . . ." (v. 25). This was evidently another



question asked by the assembly. As in v. 12 he again states that there is no recorded teaching of the Lord to appeal to. Hence he gives his opinion or judgment, and ends by affirming that he was speaking by the Spirit of God with Spirit-given wisdom.

The distress then present was such that the apostle considered it advisable to abstain from marriage (cf. Jer. 16:1-7 for a similar word to the prophet). What the distress in Corinth was we are not told. Conjecture is vain. But marriage was not forbidden. It would not be sin to marry, though it would mean trouble in the flesh. It is probable that the words "The time is short" are a reference to the imminence of the Lord's return, and how it should affect the believer in every aspect and department of his life (vs. 29-31). He should be like Uriah, a soldier on active service. The advantages of the single state are again emphasized, but he is careful lest avoiding marriage should prove to be a snare to them (v. 34). Hence he makes it crystal-clear that there is perfect liberty whether to marry or give in marriage. Problems arise as to who the virgins are. Are they the unmarried daughters of believers, who are themselves believers? Or are they virgins who have been betrothed? Some suggest that the term applies equally to young men and young women. J.N.D. translates it as "virginity" in vs. 36-37, but it is very difficult to understand it in v. 37 especially.

**7. Viewed in the light of the death of the husband** (vs. 39-40). In these concluding verses three things are made clear. (1) The marriage bond of the believer is only dissolved by death. (2) The widow is free to marry, but only in the Lord, that is, only to a fellow believer in Christ and in the will of the Lord. (3) The apostle's teaching was by the Spirit of God.

The seven references to the "Lord" in this section should be noted. We read of the "mercy of the Lord" (v. 25); the things that "belong to the Lord" (v. 32); pleasing the Lord (v. 32); attending upon the Lord (v. 35), and "in the Lord" (v. 39).

The chapter is an important contribution to the subject of Christian marriage. It very unequivocally establishes its legitimacy and adequately deals with its expediency for certain people, under certain circumstances and for certain purposes. In his first letter to Timothy the apostle castigates "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats" as "doctrines of demons". Such teaching can only produce a spurious holiness (1 Tim. 4 : 1-5.)

### **The Christian Assembly and its personal liberty :**

(6 : 12-11 : 1) (Contd.)

#### **B. (a) In relation to the weak brother. (8 : 1-13).**

**"Now as touching things offered to idols . . ."** (v. 1). It is rather surprising that such a question should have been asked. The apostle had laboured in Corinth for the greater part of two years, and it is difficult to believe or think that during that time the question had not been brought up and discussed. From the words "Be not deceived . . ." (6 : 9) it is evident, as already mentioned, that some deceiver was at work in the assembly, seeking to corrupt it by turning the grace of God into an opportunity to gratify the lusts of the flesh. The necessity that had arisen to use such strong language as in 6 : 12 regarding fornication, and now concerning meat offered to idols, reveals the slimy trail of the serpent manifest elsewhere also (Rev. 2 : 14, 20). The problem raised was twofold in character : (1) that of eating the meat

in the idol's temple at some festival (8 : 10); and (2) that of partaking of it in a private house (10 : 25, 28). The apostle enters upon a lengthy discussion of the subject, whereas one might have expected him to have answered it in a few brief sentences, or to have quoted the decision of the Jerusalem council. It would have been easy to have dispensed with the question by giving a few rules and regulations. On the contrary he deals with essential and vitally important principles which are applicable to all matters concerning which Christians may have a conscience, and regarding which there is no plain "Thus saith the Lord" to guide them. It is this that makes these chapters so important to us today. The actual problem of eating meat offered to idols affects, comparatively speaking, very few today, but the principles enunciated are of universal application (e.g., social drinking, smoking, attending cinemas, the T.V., matters of dress, etc., etc.). A carnal Christian, and even an unconverted man, can observe rules, but it takes spiritual perception and power, spiritual exercise and energy to translate principles into practice.

**"Knowledge puffeth up, . . . love edifieth . . ."** (8 : 1-8). Knowledge and love are contrasted. The one puffs up a person with pride. The other builds up. One's knowledge at best is very limited, whereas to "love God" is the path of true knowledge. The apostle acknowledges the truth of what evidently the strong in Corinth were contending for, that the idol is nothing and that the gods and lords many supposedly worshipped were in reality non-existent. To the Christian there was but one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, to Whom creation owes its existence (Col. 1 : 16; John 1 : 3), and for Whom (v. 6) and through Whom (v. 7) we live. The unity of the Father and the Son in the Godhead is thus emphatically taught as a basically fundamental Christian doctrine.

But every Christian has not entered into such a clear apprehension of the truth regarding Gentile deities and idols. Some, because of a long acquaintance or custom of acknowledging the idol, find it difficult to dissociate themselves from that feeling. Hence their conscience, being weak, is thereby defiled. So what one believer could do, the other could not. By exercising what he felt was his liberty to eat, he was none the better, and by not eating, or by sacrificing his vaunted liberty, he would not be the loser in any way. Eating or abstaining from certain foods does not bring a man near to God. Hence no vital spiritual gain or loss is involved in partaking or not partaking. This is an important principle and has wide application in all countries where deeply rooted customs prevail. It should help to guide the spiritual Christian. No believer can say like Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

"But take heed lest . . ." (8:9-13). The word **liberty** is used seven times in these chapters (8:9 9:4, 5, 6, 12, 18). It has the idea of right or authority. The apostle warns them that in asserting their rights, their claim to exercise their liberty to sit and eat in the idol's temple, the temple precincts might prove to be a stumbling block to the weak. Thereby they would be placing an obstacle in the path of the latter, over which they might trip and fall, possibly irretrievably (v. 11). In the light of John 10:28 the perishing here envisaged denotes serious spiritual disaster rather than perishing eternally. On the other hand love seeks the good of the other, seeks to edify him or build him up in his Christian faith. The wrong or selfish exercise of his rights would embolden or encourage or edify (same word as in vs. 1, 10) the weak brother to act contrary to his conscience. This would lead to his making shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19). The apostle

does not address them as "the strong" or associate himself with them as such as he does in Rom. 15 :1. This was doubtless because the point at issue was essentially different, as is made evident later in ch. 10. However, the one who professed superior knowledge was to remember, (1) that the weak was a brother; (2) that he was one for whom Christ died; and (3) that to sin against him was to sin against Christ (vs. 11-12). In the chapter we read of a weak conscience, a defiled conscience, an emboldened conscience, and a wounded conscience. Wounding a weak conscience is like striking an invalid. Consequently, in conclusion the apostle states what his attitude would be and what principles he would be guided by. He would abstain from eating flesh, if by his eating, his brother would be stumbled. He would walk charitably (Rom. 14 :10). He would be motivated by love for his weak brother. Note the references to the "brother" in verses 11-13 (cf. Lk. 15 :27-32). While in this chapter the action is viewed in its relation to the weak brother, in ch. 10 :21 it is clearly condemned as being totally incompatible with the Christian's fellowship with God.

### **The Christian Assembly and personal liberty :**

(8 :1-11 :1).

(b) **In relation to the Gospel.** (9 :1-23).

**"Am I not free? . . ."** (1-7). Having stated his own personal reaction he proceeds with the question, "Am I not free? Have I not the rights of an apostle?" This is undoubtedly the order in which these questions should be asked, as the main subject before the apostle is not to prove his apostleship, though he asserts it, but to show that he had for the gospel's sake surrendered his God-given rights. He had not availed himself of them. Therefore in this chapter he urges the necessity of so



exercising our liberty that we do not hinder the gospel in any way. This is another very important principle.

Though not of the original twelve, he had been given a special revelation of Jesus Christ our Lord on the road to Damascus, and the Corinthians were the seal, the God-given evidence, of his apostleship. That was his legal answer to those who would wish to examine him, or his credentials, and seek to pass judgment on him. Possibly some had concluded that he had worked with his hands and had not been chargeable to the assembly because he was not an apostle, such as Cephas and the others. Such a supposition was false. Hence he asks three questions. These relate to the liberty to eat and drink at the expense of the assembly; to be married and to take his wife around with him, even as Cephas and the brethren of the Lord were doing. The way in which the word "brethren" is introduced would lead to the conclusion that they were the real children of Mary and Joseph. The third question relates to the right to forbear working. It is this last that the apostle enlarges upon. He gives a threefold answer from human affairs: (1) The soldier — the warrior. The work of the gospel is considered as warfare (cf. 2 Cor. 10 : 4; 2 Tim. 2 : 3-4). He would be paid his wages; (2) The husbandman — the worker. As the owner he would eat the fruit; (3) The shepherd — the watchman. He who feeds the flock would partake of the benefit. The better he fed them, the more milk there would be. When in Crete and other Middle East countries in 1952, I learnt that sheep are kept for their milk. The butter and cheese I partook of were made from sheep's milk.

"Say I these things as a man . . ." (9 : 8-14). In these verses the argument is pursued by a threefold appeal to Scripture.



(1) The plowman and he that thresheth, labourers in the harvest field – the commencement and conclusion of the harvest (v. 10). The ox that treadeth out the corn must not be muzzled (Deut. 25:4). Paul's quotation of this shows that its figurative rather than its literal meaning was the primary application. Paul had done the sowing. Hence he was entitled to reap the carnal benefits, the supply of his material needs. Others had exercised this right while at Corinth. But he had not exercised his rights, lest he should hinder the gospel, lest he should, as it were, cut up the road, or destroy a bridge, thereby delaying the progress of an army. Note the words "lest we should hinder . . ." (v. 12).

(2) The Levite and the priest (v. 13). Those who ministered at the temple, or they that waited at the altar, were maintained thereby. Provision was made for the Levite by the tithes of the people, and for the priests by the altar.

(3) The preacher of the gospel. He was similarly to live of the gospel (v. 14). Though no such command is recorded, the teaching is involved in Matt. 10:10 and Luke 10:7. The labourer is worthy of his hire. In this respect Christians need to realize more fully their privileges and responsibilities. Having thus established his rights or his claims, the apostle proceeds to show how and why he had renounced these rights, or why he had not used them to the full (v. 18).

**"But I have used . . ." (15-18).** (1) As a steward of the gospel necessity pressed on him. He was duty-bound to preach. He realized that some calamity would overtake him, some woe would come upon him if he did not

fulfil his duty, seeing a stewardship of the gospel had been committed to him. Having been put in trust with the gospel, he was a debtor to all, and his wage was to preach the gospel willingly and without charge. The spread of the gospel was thus his first aim.

**“For though I be free . . .”** (1923). (2) **As a slave.** He was a free man. In his freedom as a Roman citizen he gloried. But voluntarily he became a slave, and this also for the gospel’s sake (v. 23). His aim was to reach as many as possible, and see as many as possible saved. To avoid offending Jewish susceptibilities he allowed Timothy to be circumcised. Although not under the law, but under grace, nevertheless he accommodated his practices whilst among Jews so that they would not be antagonized needlessly. Amongst the Gentiles, those not under law, he was under no restraint as far as Jewish prejudices were concerned. But this does not mean that he was lawless. He was in-lawed to Christ, that is, under His authority. Similarly to the weak, whether the weak be a converted Jew (Rom. 14-15) or of Gentile origin (1 Cor. 8-10), he was prepared to sacrifice any and all personal considerations where no vital principle was concerned.

### **The Christian Assembly and personal liberty.**

(c) **In relation to reward (24-27).**

**“Know ye not that they which run . . .”** As a striving athlete. The competitor in the games underwent strict training for months, and the winner only received a leafy, fading, corruptible crown. It meant much self-denial and strict control of the bodily appetites, to be physically fit for the ordeal. What was otherwise quite lawful or legitimate had to be set aside and avoided in the interest

of fitness for the race. Even so, the Christian must be prepared to forego what might be considered his lawful rights if he is to win the prize. It would be perfectly legitimate to wear boots when running a race, but it would not be expedient. Paul strained every nerve to win the incorruptible crown.

As a **boxer** Paul was not indulging in shadow-boxing. He kept his body under. This is suggested by some to mean literally "to give a black eye", bringing it into complete subjection, or taking a prisoner captive in a war. It would be quite legitimate for a boxer to eat calorie-loaded foods, but it would not be expedient. It would render him unfit for the boxing bout.

As a **herald** he had called others to the contests, and had proclaimed the rules of the games. To him disqualification would be doubly serious. He determined that he would put forth every effort so as not to be rejected, and thereby lose the crown. But he dreaded the possibility of being disapproved, of being set aside like a cracked vessel. The section deals with service and its possible rewards and not with the matter of salvation. The references to the gospel in this chapter should be noted (vs. 12, 14, 16, 18, 23). Note the words "lest by any means . . ." (v. 27).

**The Christian Assembly and personal liberty (6 : 12-11 : 1).**

**(d) In relation to fellowship with God (10 : 1-11 : 1).**

"For, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant . . ." (1-5). In these verses the apostle recounts Israel's national privileges. The first word "moreover" would be better rendered "for", since what the apostle was about to remind them of, had a close parallel to that

which he had spoken of in chapter 9:27 concerning the necessity of keeping the body in subjection, to avoid being overcome by the law of sin in its members. The word "all" is repeated in connection with each of the five privileges mentioned. The baptism unto Moses brought them completely under the leadership and authority of Moses, even as it severed them from Egypt, the scene of their bondage, and from Pharaoh, their former master. In the wilderness they had been provided with a table. Daily they ate the manna and drank the water. That was to them the table which the Lord provided for them. But in the majority the Lord did not find pleasure. They died in the wilderness. Only two of the 603,550 men of war who had come out of Egypt entered the land (Num. 14:29-30; Deut. 2:14). As this passage records and illustrates the disciplinary acts of God upon His redeemed people, the unbelief of Kadesh-Barnea is not mentioned. But the tribe of Levi did not come under the stroke of judgment. They numbered 22,000 from a month old and upwards (Num. 3:39), and 8,580 from 30 years old and upwards (Num. 4:36, 40, 44). It is often said and taken for granted as true that of all who came out of Egypt only two went into the land. That is not so. The two referred to are Joshua and Caleb. They were men of war. Even so, the number who perished in the wilderness was very large.

**"Now these things were our ensamples . . ."** (6-13). Twice in this section the apostle states that they were types, intended to teach us, and that they actually happened as types, and have been recorded for our benefit and blessing. Five things are reported. Two concern the first generation. In v. 6 reference is made to the events of Num. 11:4 when they despised the manna. In v. 7 the worshipping of the golden calf and its associated

dancing is referred to (Exod. 32:6). That was a true idol festival, a table of demons, a provision and temptation of Satan. Its consequences were serious. The next two concern the second generation, and refer to events which occurred in the last year, after they had reached Kadesh-Barnea the second time. Verse 8 chronicles the sad affairs connected with the Moabites, when again the Israelites turned to idolatry and worshipped Baal-Peor, the abominable idol (Hosea 9:10), and committed fornication. Twenty-three thousand fell in judgment in **one day**, says Paul. Twenty-four thousand died altogether (Num. 25:1-9). In v. 9 the sad and solemn episode of the fiery serpents (Num. 21:4-9) is referred to, whereas v. 10 would seem to cover the whole period of their wilderness journeyings, with special reference to the rebellion of Korah (Num. 14:2; 16:1-35). These were severe visitations of judgment, and their application to the problem at Corinth was self-evident. The words "Let him that thinketh he standeth" apply to those who wished to claim their rights and exercise their liberty in connection with eating food offered to idols. They were to take heed **lest they should fall**. This is often taken as a warning lest one should fall into sin, but the context rather points to falling under the judgment of God, as those in the wilderness did (v. 8 cr. Heb. 10:31). They are reminded that they had not been subjected to any exceptional or extraordinary temptation or trial, but that which was the common lot of all, and they could depend on the faithfulness of God to provide a way through which they could escape, even as He had done at the Red Sea for Israel. The four occurrences of the word "lest" should be noted (8:9; 9:12, 27; 10:12). They furnish us with four guide-lines for the exercise of Christian liberty.

**"Wherefore . . . flee from idolatry" (14-22).** In view of



the solemn illustrations from Israel's history, they were exhorted to flee from idolatry even as they had been previously warned to flee from fornication (6 : 13). These have been the great twin enemies of the people of God in all periods, whether in the wilderness, or in the time of the judges (Jud. 17-19), or in the time of the kings, such as the whoredom and idolatry of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings 9 : 22). They are seen together again in the letters to the churches in Rev. 2 : 14, 20. The apostle appeals to their intelligence, their sense of discernment (v. 15), and then draws a clear line of demarcation between the two systems, Christianity and idolatry.

**“The cup of blessing . . .”** (v. 16). This corresponds to the Jewish cup of blessing. It was the cup used by the Lord at the institution of the supper (Matt. 26 : 27). Four cups were used by the Jews at the Passover supper: The cup of blessing, of which all present drank; the cup of wrath, of which none drank, and which was poured out as they recounted the ten plagues; the cup of salvation — filled to overflowing — of which all drank; the cup of the Kingdom, which looked to the future (Mark 14 : 25). The words “the cup” refer to the character of the cup, and is not to be understood as suggesting there should only be one receptacle or cup on the table. All believers partake of the same cup, the cup of blessing. **“Which we bless”.** These words are to be understood as the giving of thanks. From a comparison of the relative portions in the gospels (Matt. 26 : 26-27; Mark 14 : 22-25; Luke 22 : 19-20 and 1 Cor. 11 : 24, cf. Jas. 3 : 9; Ps. 103 : 1) it is clear that the word “bless” is to be understood as the giving of thanks, rather than consecrating the emblems. **“It is not the communion of the blood of Christ?”** It is a confession of our identification with Christ in His death, and is the expres-



sion of a fellowship based upon the redemptive work of Christ.

**“The bread which we break . . .”** That is, the bread of which we partake, **“Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”** It is a fellowship, a participation by those who are fellow-members of the body of Christ. The bread being mentioned after the cup suggests that while the cup refers to the shed blood, or the crucifixion of Christ, the bread is symbolic in this portion, as is evident from v. 17, of the Church which is His body. This came into being at His exaltation (Eph. 1 : 22-23)). Thus the cup and the bread in this order are suggestive of the crucifixion and glorification of Christ respectively. **“We being many are one bread, one body”** (v. 17). Partaking of the one loaf symbolizes the oneness of believers as members of the body. There is therefore a very definite historical and doctrinal order followed in vs. 16-17. Note the same connection in Eph. 2 : 16. It is by virtue of the cross that we are in the **“one body”**.

**“Behold Israel . . .”** (v. 18). The priestly family likewise, by partaking of the altar, were identified with it and the sacrifice offered thereon. The reference is to the peace-offering, of which the priests had, as their portion, the right shoulder and breast, and of which all that were clean could also eat (Lev. 7 : 19, 34). A part was offered in sacrifice. Therefore those who partook of that sacrifice had fellowship with God. They were fed from Jehovah’s table (Mal. 1 : 7, 12).

**“That which is offered to idols . . .”** (vs 19-20). Here the apostle does not move away from what is said in 8 : 4 as to the idol being nothing, but he draws attention to the fact that that which is offered in sacrifice to the idol is

actually offered to demons, because demons are associated with the lifeless idol. Therefore from the analogy of the preceding verses, to partake of food offered to idols at the idol's temple was to be identified with and have fellowship with demons. Demons are evil spirits, "the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6 : 12), under the one controlling power, that of the Devil — Satan. As the two systems, Christianity and idolatry, are diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive of each other, to partake of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of demons was absolutely impossible.

"The Lord's table." (v. 21). This expression is one which is found in the Old Testament. It is not limited to Christianity, whereas the expression "the Lord's Supper" is. In Mal. 1 : 7, 12 the altar of burnt-offering is spoken of as "the table of the Lord." And in Luke 22 : 30 similar words are used of the coming kingdom — "that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom . . .". Three illustrations are given in the chapter : 1) Israel nationally in the wilderness; 2) Israel's priests at the altar; and 3) in v. 22 there is an allusion to the ordinance of Num. 5 : 11, when the unfaithful wife was given the cup of judgment, the cup of bitterness, which would make her thigh rot and thus become an object lesson to all. Because of Israel's idolatry, she had provoked the Lord, her husband, to jealousy (Ezek. 16 : 35-38; Isaiah 54 : 5; Jer. 3 : 20; 31 : 32). Today she is an object of shame. The Christian who partook of that which was offered to idols at the idol's temple provoked the Lord in a similar way. Any fellowship with idolatry was spiritual adultery, and so is the friendship of the world (Jas. 4 : 4). Therefore to them the cup of blessing might become a cup of judgment. The eating of the manna and drinking of the water, the partaking of the altar, and of the husband's

table, all speak of a daily fellowship with God. The supper concerning which instruction is given in ch. 11 is that which gives public and corporate expression of that fellowship. The two words for fellowship — communion and partakers — occur six times (vs. 16, 18, 20, 17, 21).

A. **“All things are lawful . . .”** (23-30). In these verses the second problem referred to in chapter 8, that of eating idol meat at home, or at a friend’s house, is considered. Once again the slogan **“All things are lawful ”** is repeated. To the two overruling clauses of 6 : 12 one more is added : **“All things edify not.”** This leads the apostle to state that each one is responsible to build up the other spiritually. As the earth is the Lord’s the Christian is free to eat of whatever is sold in the market, whether it has been offered to idols or not. But if a believer should exercise his liberty to go to an unbeliever’s house, then for the sake of the conscience of anyone who might raise the question, he should abstain, even though personally he has no scruples as to eating what is set before him, lest by the exercise of his liberty he should be a cause of stumbling to the other. It is better to abstain than to allow his liberty to be evil spoken of (v. 30).

**“Whether therefore ye eat . . .”** (10 : 31-11 : 1). These verses contain a brief summary of the principles by which the Christian should be guided in the exercise of his liberty.

1. All should be done to the glory of God. This should be a governing principle in connection with all social fellowship — **“Whether we eat or drink . . .”**.

2. Care should be taken not to give offence or give cause for stumbling, either to the world or to the assembly (v. 32).

3. They should seek the profit of many with a view to their salvation, thereby following the apostle's example (11:1; cf. 8:13; 9:26-27).

In concluding this section it is well to draw attention to the statement "All things are lawful for me" which is repeated four times, twice in 6:12 and twice in 10:23. Twice the qualifying clause "But all things are not expedient" is repeated. As to whether a thing is expedient or not may be ascertained by a consideration of the two other qualifying clauses and the concluding para.

1. "I will not be brought under the power of any." The Christian should not allow himself to be enslaved by any habit. Hence the question, Does it enslave me? should be faced.

2. The second question relates to what is said in 10:23. Does it edify me, and will it edify my fellow believer?

3. The third question is, Does it exalt the Lord, or is it to the glory of God?

4. Does it follow the example of the apostle as given in ch. 9, or that of the Israelites in ch. 10?

**5. The Christian Assembly and its ministry (11:2-15:11).** These chapters form one of the main sections of the epistle. They contain instruction which is found nowhere else in the New Testament. The teaching given is of vital importance if the gatherings of the assemblies are to fulfil their divinely intended purpose. The apostle wrote to correct irregularities, and to regulate their behaviour when gathered together "in assembly" or in assembly character. First he considers their ministry Godward as a

priestly company in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Secondly, he considers their ministry churchward, the exercise of the prophetic ministry for the edification of the assembly, and thirdly their ministry worldward, the gospel and its proclamation. This threefold ministry is illustrated for us in the parable of the servant in Luke 17:7-10. He plows, and in speaking of his gospel ministry the apostle says, "he that plows, plows in hope." Then he feeds the flock. Then he makes ready, or prepares a meal for his master, and then he waits on his master as he partakes of what the servant had prepared. May we know that most essential preparation of heart so that we may minister acceptably to the Lord as He sits at the table, His table.

#### A. Godward (11:2-34).

The section falls naturally into two parts introduced by two contrasting statements. "Now I praise you . . ." (v. 2). "I praise you not" (v. 17).

"Now I praise you brethren . . ." (2-16). The absence of the words "Now concerning . . ." used in 7:1; 8:1; 12:1 indicate that the Corinthians had not asked regarding these matters in their letter, and the words of v. 2 and v. 17 suggest that they had stated in their letter that they were observing all that he had taught them or delivered to them, referred to as "ordinances" or "traditions". The word does not refer to some rite or ceremony on the one hand or something handed down from preceding generations on the other. It refers to what the apostle had taught them, and it relates to matters of faith and practice. Ch. 11:23-25 and 15:3 are specific illustrations, as also 2 Thess. 2:15. Apostolic teaching was both authoritative and binding. The apostle commends them for holding to the truth which they had been taught, and as



noted in the introductory chapter the assembly was sound doctrinally with the exception of the error concerning the resurrection mentioned in 15:12.

**“But I would have you know . . .”** (v. 3). While they were zealous of spiritual gifts and enquired regarding them, they were ignorant of that which was basically important, the truth of Divine headships (vs 2-16). They also failed to realize the solemnity of the fact that holiness becomes the house of God (vs 17-34). This infantile spiritual state was also reflected in their failure to recognize the sign of division (chs 1-4) or to mourn over the licentious living of one, and the litigiousness of others (chs 5-6).

**“The head of every man is Christ . . .”** (v. 3). Doubtless when the apostle was in Corinth he taught them what is stated in Gal. 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” By the gospel woman is elevated to a place of honour totally foreign to what she is given in non-Christian faiths, and it appears that the women in the assembly abused their liberty both as to modesty of apparel and subordination to man. Hence the apostle shows that the order of creation still stands. It remains unchanged and has not been abrogated by the gospel. The passage in Gal. 3:28 refers to the judicial standing of the believer before God “in Christ”; it does not cancel natural relationships. Order or authority and subordination or subjection are characteristic of the universe as built-in laws, and are absolutely essential to its continued existence, to its very being. If these are not recognized, then collapse and ruin must inevitably follow. In the hierarchy of headships three are mentioned. The relationship considered is not that of husband and wife as in Eph. 5:23 where we read that the husband is the



head of the wife, but the man and woman, or the male and female relationships. Christ is not said to be the head of every husband, but of every man, that is, believing men. Unbelievers are not considered in the passage. Connected with headship are relationship, representation, responsibility and rule. Quite independent of the marriage bond, man is the head of the woman and is to bear rule. For this he is held responsible before God. It is because of this that Adam's sin as distinct from Eve's plunged the race into darkness and death (Rom. 5 : 12). In the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians Christ is said to be the head of the Church, which is His body, and of all principality and power (Eph. 1 : 22; Col. 2 : 10). Between the body and the head there is an indissoluble bond of life, and it is through Him that it receives spiritual nourishment (Col. 2 : 19).

**"The head of Christ is God . . .".** This is indicative of the fact that the Lord at His incarnation took the place of subjection to the Father. That relationship remains unchanged. The Lord will never divest Himself of His manhood (cf. 3 : 23; 15 : 28). Though "of the full deity possessed" and therefore co-equal with the Father in power and glory, administratively He is subject to God the Father. He took the place of the servant (Isa. 42 : 1). In that path of obedience He ever sought the will and glory of God. This is the perfect pattern set before man in his path of submission and sphere of responsibility. What a high standard! And this in turn becomes the standard set before the woman in her path of subordination and sphere of responsibility. For her to take or assume the place of leadership accorded to man is tantamount to usurping his authority (1 Tim. 2 : 12). Man's sin was an act of defiance and an attempt at being as God. Woman's sin is often a defiance of God's order and taking the place

of man. Is not this very evident today?

“Every man praying or prophesying . . .” (vs 4-7). In apostolic days these were the two main functions of spiritual leadership. The Scriptures being as yet incomplete they were dependent upon those who were prophets and spoke by revelation. This is evident from 14:30. These four verses are made up of two couplets. Vs 4 & 7 refer to man, and vs 5-6 to the woman. It would seem like an introversion, a chiasmic structure. Verse 7 gives the reason for what is stated in v.4. Man being the image and glory of God, he should not be covered, for thereby he would dishonour his head, that is, Christ. It is possible that some men in Corinth were guilty in this respect, or it may be that the apostle is laying the foundation for the instruction as to men being without a veil or covering. In vs 5-6 instruction is given as to women wearing a veil when either praying or prophesying in public. Woman being the “glory of man”, she must wear a veil, as the “glory of man” should be veiled or covered in God’s presence. It is evident that this irregularity prevailed in the assembly at Corinth, and it is **this irregularity** that the apostle is correcting in this passage. To take this passage as giving authority for women to take part publicly in the assembly would conflict with the plain prohibition of 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:8-12. The apostle seems to follow a similar method in 6:4, 7 and 8:10. What he allows in 6:4 is virtually cancelled in v.7. And from 8:10 one might gather that the apostle would raise no objection to a Christian accepting an invitation from a heathen friend to eat with him at the idol’s temple, which would have been in honour of the deity. But in 10:20-22 the seriousness of such an act of compromise is made very clear.

“For man is not of the woman . . .” (11:8-12). In

vs 4-7 the veil or head covering of the woman is symbolic of her subjection in the Christian order. In these verses it is symbolic of her subjection in the order of creation. These verses are also an introversion. Verse 8 corresponds to v. 12, v. 9 to v. 11 with v. 10 as the centre. The verses are important in that they establish the fact that the apostle considered the words of Genesis to be historical and therefore factual. As the veil, or the head covering, is the symbol of woman's subjection to man, angels thereby learn the manifold wisdom of God, for she illustrates the subjection of the Church to Christ (Eph. 3:10). While man was created first, and woman is of the man, in the process of pro-creation they are mutually interdependent. Man is by the woman. Motherhood is her crown and glory. "But all things of God." In 2 Cor. 5:18 the same is predicated of the new creation. This leaves no room for any evolutionary theory.

"Judge ye yourselves . . ." (vs 13-15). In these verses her subjection is symbolized by nature itself and by nature's provision for her in her long hair. While the majority of men get bald, some very young, women generally are blessed with long hair. The apostle appeals to the sense of propriety in these verses. Masculinity in women and femininity in men are both repulsive. Moody is reported to have prayed on one occasion, "From long-haired men, and short-haired women, may the good Lord deliver us."

To interpret the words "Her hair is given her for a covering" or in lieu of a veil and thereby suggest that the artificial veil is unnecessary would completely annul the meaning and purpose of vs 5-6. "If the woman be not covered let her also be shorn." Let her be reduced to the level of the prostitute or the woman of loose morals,

which would be shameful. Such women wore no veil or head-covering, and slave women had their hair shorn.

**“But if any man seem to be contentious . . .”** (v. 16). This verse may mean that Paul was emphasizing the importance of what he had been considering by stating that he and his fellow-workers or the churches had no such custom as debating about things of no value. The churches were not debating societies. Or more probably it may mean that Paul wished to silence the “lover of debate” by stating that what he had taught was the authoritative and accepted teaching in the assemblies of God.

**“Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not . . .”** (vs 17-22). The words “this that I declare unto you” refer to what he had stated in vs 2-16 regarding headships and their irregularities in the matter of head-covering. He goes on to say that he could not commend them because of some things which he had heard that were far more serious. He partly believed them. He was prepared to accept these reports as being to some extent true, though as always, all that one hears cannot be taken at their full face value. Reports of such troubles tend to become exaggerated. The apostle wished to maintain their confidence by guarding against suspicion. He was prepared to commend where possible (1 : 4-7; 11 : 2), even as the Lord does in Rev. chs 2-3. Their gross misconduct at their gatherings made commendation impossible. Instead of their gatherings being to the glory of God and their mutual edification, they were actually derogatory to the Lord and detrimental to themselves. There were factions among them, cliques or parties based on racial and social distinctions. The rich shamed the poor. In this way there was an alienation of heart and affection. Like the church at Ephesus they had left their “first love”

(Rev. 2:4). This is somewhat different from what the apostle had condemned earlier in the letter (1:12). Besides the factions (schisms) there were heresies. Today the word heresy is applied to what is fundamental error in matters of doctrine—heretical teaching. The word denotes a choice, a preference, a chosen way of life or sect, or a school of thought or opinion. It is rendered “sect” in Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5; 27:28. In 1 Cor. 11:19 and Gal. 5:20 it means dissension. These “heresies”, the apostle says, were a “must” in order that the approved might be made manifest. This was the purpose God had in view in permitting such (Duet. 13:3). By their heresies, that is, by their choosing of false doctrine, they created and brought about factions. This in turn became a test of faithfulness. Apostasy is always a test of loyalty (Exod. 32:25-26; 2 Sam. 15:7-23).

The discrimination against the poor and the drunken disorderliness of the rich made it morally impossible for them to eat of the Lord's Supper, however much they thought they were so doing. Each one ate his own supper. This is probably a reference to the love-feasts mentioned elsewhere (2 Peter 2:13; Jude 12). These love-feasts were common meals preceding the Lord's Supper, towards which each Christian contributed in kind rather than in money according to his ability. But even these were disgracefully observed. They had not been ordained by the Lord. They possibly had some connection with the communal life which characterized the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:44). The question “Have ye not houses to eat and drink in?” indicates that the apostle did not wish them continued. The intoxicated state of some is a reminder of the sons of Aaron (Lev. 10:1-11). Their sin occurring immediately after their consecration and the inauguration of the tabernacle worship, was severely and



summarily dealt with. This was being repeated in Corinth for some among them had died (v. 30). In view of their divisions, their dissensions, their desecration of the Supper, and despising of the assembly of God by failing to recognize its holiness and oneness, the apostle indignantly asks, "What shall I say? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." The term "church of God" here as elsewhere refers to the local gathering. Note the plural in v. 16.

### **The Lord's Supper**

The word translated "Lord's" is the adjectival form of the noun Lord. It is only found twice in the New Testament, here and in Rev. 1 : 10, where we read of the Lord's Day. It may be rendered in English by the word dominical or imperial. The first day of the week and the Supper pertain in a special way to the Lord as being connected with His resurrection.

The fact that there are seven references to their coming together as an assembly in chs 11-14 (11 : 17, 18, 20, 33, 34; 14 : 23, 26) indicate that the gathering for the celebration of the Lord's Supper and for mutual edification were both an integral part of their assembly gathering. Thus the Lord's Supper was as much a weekly gathering as the one for ministry. It was one gathering as is the case today in many areas where Christians may have to walk some miles to get to the place of meeting. This, of course, does not preclude the possibility or advisability of gathering specifically for the purpose of remembering the Lord or for ministry. But it is unfortunate that the two have been so separated and demarcated and the Lord's Supper relegated to a place of secondary importance to be observed once a month or even once in three months.

**"For I have received of the Lord . . ."** (vs 23-25). These verses record the revelation specially given to the apostle



Paul regarding the institution of the Supper in contrast to the love-feasts. Just as in the first section (2-16) the headship of Christ is emphasized, so in this His Lordship is very prominent. The word "Lord" appears some seven times. As previously noted, the use of the title by the apostle is a clear indication of how unreservedly he acknowledged His full and essential deity. The passage is of peculiar interest and importance because it was the first account of the institution of the Supper to be recorded and circulated. The epistle was written before the Gospels. Moreover it sheds light on the records of the synoptic, Gospels, and enables us to ascertain with some measure of certainty where it would have come in the account of the upper-room ministry of the Lord as related by John. Paul had already delivered the teaching concerning it to the Corinthians, and here he reminds them that he had received it as a direct revelation from the Lord. It was one of many such revelations the Lord had given directly to the apostle (Acts 18:9; 22:18; 23:11; 27:23, 25; Gal. 1:12 — his conversion —; Gal. 2:2; 1 Cor. 2:10; 2 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 3:3).

**"That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed . . ."** (v. 23). It was on the night while He was being betrayed, that is, at the time when Judas was conferring with the enemies regarding the final arrangements for the betrayal. This places it after the words "He went out, and it was night" (John 13:30). In that case it is noteworthy that probably the first words uttered by our Lord after Judas went out were, "Now is the Son of Man glorified." This golden thread may be traced all through His ministry to the eleven on that night.

**"The Lord . . . Jesus took bread . . .", "after the same manner He took the cup"** (vs. 23, 25). The Lord chose

two emblems; the one to represent His body, and the other to represent His Blood, His shed blood. Each is mentioned separately. It is evident that the Lord viewed His death as an accomplished fact, for it is impossible to have the body and blood separate as represented in the bread and the cup, without death having taken place. He stood in spirit on resurrection ground as He instituted the Supper. There is no sacerdotal meaning to be attached to the word "He **took** the bread". There is no thought of elevating, it or raising it up.

"And when He had given thanks . . .". The word Eucharist as applied to the Supper is the noun form of the verb used in this verse. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark the word from which we get the word eulogy is used. Luke uses the same word as used by Paul. In Matthew and Mark it is translated "blessed", and because the word "it" follows it (*in italics indicating that it is not in the original*), some conclude that the Lord in some way blessed the bread. But that is totally foreign to the passage. It is from this false premises that today people speak of "consecrating the elements". To the Lord it was an occasion for thanksgiving, for priestly worship, and so it should be to us. What pure incense (Exod. 30 : 34-38; 37 : 29) was that thanksgiving, and how fragrant to the Father was that worship. It was instituted for His own as a remembrance of Himself. This is its primary purpose. It is an appeal for responsive affection.

"This is my body . . ." (v. 24). These simple words have been made the basis for the false and blasphemous theory called transubstantiation, which maintains that after the elements are consecrated by the priest(?) they become the actual body and blood of the Lord! Luther invented the idea of consubstantiation, which maintains

that they become the body and blood of the Lord when the individual partakes of them. Both are equally false. It is well to be clear that bread and wine are emblematic **only**. The word "is" does not mean "becomes" in any passage where it is used. It is to be understood literally in passages such as "This is our son" (John 9:20), and metaphorically, that is, as representing something else, in passages such as "The field is the world" (Matt. 15:38); "That rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4); "Is not this the blood of the men . . ." (2 Sam. 23:17). When the Lord said, "This is my body", He was bodily present with His disciples, hence the words as referring to the bread cannot possibly be understood in a literal sense. Moreover, of the cup and its contents the Lord said, "This is the new covenant in my blood."

.. **"This do for a remembrance of me."** (vs. 24-25). These words are not to be understood as a carnal commandment, but as the reflection of a heartfelt longing. Hence the believer's presence there is not the mere fulfilling of a duty or obedience to a command, but the manifestation of his devotion to a person—the Lord Himself. When David "longed, and said, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate", he gave expression to his longing. It was not a royal or military command. The three mighty men who went and fetched it did it out of devotion to David (2 Sam. 23:15-16).

**"This is the new covenant . . ."** (v. 25). This is a reminder to the one who partakes that the old covenant ratified at Sinai (Exod. 24:1-8) has been abrogated, annulled, and that the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah has been ratified (Jer. 31:31-34). This is the better covenant of Hebrews chs. 8-10. The remembrance

supper is in marked contrast to the sacrifices in which there was a remembrance of sins every year (Heb. 10 : 3).

**“For as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup . . .”** (v. 26). At the Supper that night each of the eleven ate of the bread and drank of the cup. In the four explanatory verses (26-29) there are five references to eating and drinking. The Christians at Corinth, no less than the eleven, as well as Christians today are to partake of both emblems.

**“Ye do shew the Lord’s death . . .”** (v. 26). The assembly collectively partaking of the Supper is a way of proclaiming the Lord’s death. The word translated “shew” in every other instance where it is used means to announce. The same meaning is the natural one here (cf. Exod. 13 : 8, “Thou shalt shew thy son saying . . .”). The word nowhere conveys the idea of presenting anything to God. It is a way of announcing to all present the redemptive character and purpose of our Lord’s death. Of this aspect of the Supper the memorial passover is an illustration. Just as that was for Israelites only (Exod. 12 : 42-48), and commemorative only, so with the Supper, it is for His own only and purely memorial in character. Just as no Israelite was ever redeemed by the commemorative passover, so no individual today can ever be saved by partaking of the emblems — bread and wine.

**“till He come . . .”** (v. 26). Thus at the Supper our hearts are directed to the love of God displayed at the cross, and the patience of Christ as He waits with expectation the day of His return to receive His own (John 14 : 1-3; 2 Thess. 3 : 8).

**“Wherefore whosoever . . .”** (vs. 27-29). Individual responsibility is here emphasized as also in the use of the

singular in vs. 28-29 : "Let a man examine himself . . .", "eateth and drinketh judgment to himself". There is no suggestion of confessing to another, priest or otherwise. Nothing is said as to anyone officiating at the supper, or of a priest administering it as a sacrament, or of anyone conducting it as a communion service. The Christian is to partake worthily, that is, in a manner worthy of the Lord and His redemptive work. His life and conduct should be clean. The priest in the tabernacle who ministered with unwashed hands and feet did so unworthily and the penalty was death. (Exod. 30 : 21; Ps. 24 : 3-4; 26 : 1). The consequences to the Israelite who ate of the peace-offering in a defiled state were serious and solemn (Lev.. 7 : 20-21).

"Not discerning the body . . ." (v. 29) may refer to the failure to discern the true character of the Supper and the meaning of the emblems as indicated in vs. 24-25. Or they may refer to the failure of the Christians to recognize the oneness of the Church as the body of Christ as indicated in vs. 21-22 (cf. Gal. 2 : 12-14).

"For this cause . . ." (vs. 30-32). Because many of the Christians in Corinth failed to discern the true nature and implications or demands of the Supper and to examine or judge themselves, they fell under the chastising hand of the Lord (cf. 10 : 12; 2 Chron. 30 : 18-20). Some were sick, and some had died. But this, however solemn, is not to be interpreted as being the same as the judgment of the wicked. Such chastisement is disciplinary and temporal. It is not eternal.

"Wherefore my brethren . . ." (vs. 33-34). A clear line of distinction is drawn between the Lord's Supper and an ordinary meal. If anyone was hungry he should



eat at home. They were to tarry one for another rather than selfishly and hurriedly eat their own. There were other matters relative to the Supper which the apostle would set in order on his arrival.

The many occurrences of the title Lord in the passage demands further consideration.

1. "I have received of the **Lord** that which also I delivered unto you" (v. 23). As Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and had a special stewardship committed to him regarding the Church, the fact that he was given a special revelation concerning it indicates the importance attached to it by the Lord. Paul waited seven days at Troas so as to be there for the breaking of bread (Acts 20 : 7).

2. "That the **Lord Jesus** the same night in which He was betrayed . . ." (v. 23). The dual title is noteworthy, emphasizing His dual nature, His deity and humanity. The words "in the night in which He was betrayed" add a note of tenderness to His request.

3. It is for the "**Lord's people**", those who have acknowledged Him as Lord. The expression "The Lord's people" is not found in the New Testament, but several times in the Old (Num. 11 : 29 ; Jud. 5 : 11 . . . ). However, the epistle is addressed to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 : 2).

4. It was observed on the first day of the week, the **Lord's Day**, the imperial day (1 Cor. 16 : 1; Acts 20 : 7; Rev. 1 : 10).

5. It is a corporate expression of the fellowship of the **Lord's Table** (1 Cor. 10 : 16-22).



6. It is called the **Lord's Supper**, or dominical supper (11 : 20).

7. It is a proclamation of the **Lord's death** (11 : 25), both as to its propitiatory and expiatory character. Cf. Lev. 16 : 11-20 (propitiation) and Lev. 16 : 21-22 (expiation).

8. It is a weekly reminder of the **Lord's coming** (v. 25).

9. Connected with its observance is the **Lord's honour** (11 : 27-30 ; Ps. 26 : 8).

A consideration of expressions used reveals its varied aspects and underline its importance. As these are illustrated in the Old Testament a brief reference to them will be instructive.

1. The "**breaking of bread**" (Acts 2 : 42; 20 : 7). This is the way it is spoken of in the book of the Acts, and is doubtless connected with a custom prevalent among the Jews and mentioned in the Old Testament (Jer. 16 : 7). After the death of a loved one, friends would gather in the home of the bereaved and express their fellowship with them in their mourning by breaking bread and drinking the cup of consolation. It was a simple memorial of one whom they loved. The grief and sorrow would be great if the one who had died was a young man, a son upon whom the future of the family depended. It was doubtless this that the two disciples were going to do at Emmaus. But the resurrection changed it from being a time of mourning to one of joy and fellowship with the risen Lord. In Melchizedek character he gave thanks, and he was known of them in "the breaking of the bread" (Luke. 24 : 30-35). The Lord said, "This do for a remembrance of me." But we need to remember that remembrance in Scripture always leads to action, as for example "God remembered Noah", and "God remembered

Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow . . .” (Gen. 19 : 29). The chief butler said, “I do remember my faults this day” (Gen. 41 : 9). Remembrance should have a practical outcome.

2. **“The Lord’s Supper”** (1 Cor. 11 : 20). This suggests a connection with the passover supper observed by the nation of Israel. It was not a memorial to Moses, but a commemoration of their redemption through the sacrificial passover (Exod. 12). Similarly, only with greater significance, the Lord’s Supper is the proclamation of the Lord’s death, the basis of our redemption. It is a commemoration of His death, hence prominence should be given to the Cross at the Supper.

3. The words **“This is the new covenant in my blood . . .”** are the New Testament counterpart of Exod. 24 : 8, **“This is the blood of the covenant . . .”**. By that covenant Israel had been brought into a new relationship with Jehovah, symbolized as marriage by Ezekiel (ch. 16 : 8). Consequently, Moses and the elders held a feast, they ate and they drank, it was a feast of celebration as they had been given a vision of the glory of God. By the blood of the new covenant we have been brought into a much nearer relationship with the Lord, and the Lord’s Supper is a feast of celebration, a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving, a true eucharist. It is a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

4. **The Lord’s Table** (10 : 21). The words of 10 : 18 are a reference to the priestly family partaking of the peace-offering for thanksgiving. They were given, as their portion, the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder (Lev. 7 : 34). Thereby they became partakers with the altar and were in fellowship with God. The altar is spoken of as the table of the Lord in Mal. 1 : 7, 12. The Supper of

ch. 11 is the corporate weekly expression of this fellowship.

5. Melchizedek and Abram (Gen. 14:17-24). This is the first time bread and wine are mentioned together in Scripture. Together they celebrated the victory. To Abram that day there was granted a new revelation of God as the preserver of heaven and earth, and it preserved him from the snare set for him by the king of Sodom. So it was both the celebration of a victory and a means of preservation. At the Supper we celebrate the Lord's great victory over our great spiritual enemies, and it should preserve us from compromise with the world.

In the incident of the butler and the baker we also have bread and wine. Then in Joseph's dealings with his brothers there is a special emphasis on the cup, and we should remember and apply the words of Joseph to ourselves as we take the cup. "He that hath the cup shall be my servant." Unfortunately Joshua was deceived by the Gibeonites because of their bread and wine. And even the immoral Levite had his bread and wine. How easy to feed on the husks, the empty form without the reality. Every Gibeonite has his bread and wine.

The Christian Assembly and its ministry. (11:2-15:11).

B. Churchward. (chs. 12-14).

"Now concerning spiritual gifts . . ." (12:1). The word translated "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*) being the genitive plural may be understood as either masculine or neuter. If understood as masculine it would refer to spiritual persons, persons who exercise leadership by having been endowed with spiritual gifts. This is clearly the case in 2:15, 3:1; 14:37 and Gal. 6:1. Whether the word is to be understood as masculine or neuter depends on the

context. "The word is not used in the O.T.—the LXX, so it is a post-Pentecost word." (W. E. Vine. Expos. Dictionary). It is well to note the use of the word in the N. T.

1. **Spiritual persons** (1 Cor. 2 : 13; 3 : 1; 14 : 37; Gal. 6 : 1). Note the difference between the natural, carnal, and spiritual (cf. Heb. 4 : 12, "dividing asunder between soul and spirit"); (cf. Gal. 5 : 16, 25, character of spiritual man, 5 : 16—personal; v. 25, fellowship with others).

2. **Spiritual blessings** (Eph. 1 : 3). The Christian is not blessed with or promised an earthly inheritance as Israel was. They were promised material prosperity if they were obedient. This does not mean that they were not blessed spiritually, for they were.

3. **Spiritual understanding** (Col. 1 : 9; cf. Luke. 24 : 45). Spiritual intelligence is much to be desired. The opened understanding is a great boon.

4. **A spiritual house** (1 Pet. 2 : 5a). Later the apostle refers to it as the "house of God" (4 : 17; cf. Heb. 10 : 21). This spiritual house is illustrated in the Aaronic family, and in the nation of Israel (Heb. 3 : 3). Believers are constituted a holy and royal priesthood.

5. **Spiritual sacrifices** (1 Pet. 2 : 5b). This is in contrast to the animal and other sacrifices, such as the basket of first-fruits (Deut. 26 : 1-11).

6. **Spiritual gifts** (12 : 1, 4, 7, 28, 30, 31). These are given to individuals for the benefit of others, for the common good, for mutual edification. They are gifts involving grace on the part of the donor.

7. **Spiritual body** (1 Cor. 15 : 44-46). The resurrection body of the believer is to be similar to that of the glorified body of the Lord.

**"I would not have you ignorant . . ."** (12 : 1-3). These verses are a reminder and a warning.

(a) Their ignorance. These words are found elsewhere in Paul's letters and cover many subjects (Rom. 1 : 13; 2 Cor. 1 : 8; 1 Cor. 10 : 1; 1 Thess. 4 : 13; Rom. 11 : 25). The assembly at Corinth came behind in no gift, and they were zealous of spiritual gifts, but lacked the knowledge as to their purpose and character, and they did not discern their relative values. They over-estimated the value of the more spectacular gifts, and under-estimated the importance of grace and the importance of love. And they had not realized that holiness should characterize the house of God. The displeasure of the Lord had been made manifest by His disciplinary action (11 : 30). This is an echo of what happened to Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10 : 1-10). In this connection note should be taken of the solemn warnings against strange fire (Lev. 10 : 1-10)—inflamed nature or carnal zeal; strange incense (Exod. 30 : 9)—an imitation of substitute for the true, the genuine, like the prayers of the Pharisees; and strange oil (Exod. 30 : 33)—a simulation of the Holy Spirit, an imitation or false consecration (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 1-5).

(b) A reminder of their past (v. 2). As Gentile idolaters they had come under demonic power when at their idol feasts. "They were carried away even as they were led." They had been the pawns, the victims of their emotional ecstasy, and doubtless spoke in tongues, as tongues were and are practiced in non-Christian faiths. They are reminded that in the gatherings of the assembly they were not to be carried away by such emotional storms. All was to be done decently and in order (14 : 40).

(c) A warning as to the activity and aim of Satan to simulate the work of the Spirit of God (v. 3).



The hall-mark of the Spirit's ministry is the acknowledgement and exaltation of Jesus as Lord. This was the message of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). It is also the hall-mark of true theocracy, the original form of government given to Israel (cf. Jud. 8:23 "The Lord shall rule over you"). This was followed by anarchy, which led to monarchy (Jud. 21:25; 1 Sam. 8:7). In view of the activity of Satan seeking to imitate the gifts of the Spirit, both tongues and prophesying, there was the gift of discernment, the "discerning of spirits", with which 1 John 4:1 should be compared, "Try the spirits." This gift of discernment enabled them to discern the false from the true source of supernatural revelation given through prophesy or tongues (cf. 14:29 "Let the other judge").

Robert Baxter, a well-known London barrister, was involved in the Irvingite movement in London in 1830-33. In his "Narrative of Facts" covering some 150 pages he faithfully describes his experiences and lays bare his soul, when under the power, the power of utterance, and also when speaking in tongues. After telling of the power coming on him at a communion service he states, "It is certainly mysterious; but if I was unfaithful to God in forgetting my Lord's injunctions to watch as well as to pray, and admitted the claims of the spirit without trying it strictly by the doctrines, as we are enjoined to do, was it not as gracious of God to show me that I was utterly incapable by any other test of trying the spirit — God in the Word. God has shown us the rule of trial by doctrine, and had I been jealous for the holy name of my God and enquired into the doctrines, I might have been kept from the power, as afterwards, when I did enquire, the Lord opened my eyes and delivered me. Looking back on all that is past, whenever the power rested upon me leading me up to prayer or testimony or thanksgiving, I



seemed to have joy and peace in the Holy Ghost, and I cannot even now, by **feeling only**, discern that it was not truly such." On page 135 he writes, "Indeed the whole work is a mimicry of the gifts of the Spirit, the utterance, the tongue, a mimicry of the gift of tongues. And so of the prophesyings and all the other works of power. It is Satan as an angel of light, imitating as far as permitted, the Spirit of God according to the degree of unfaithfulness in the individuals or congregations with whom it is present."

On page 141 he says, "Amidst speculations the believer becomes unsettled, anxious and excited, he is continually prepared for new views which may feed the restlessness of an excited mind."

As already noted, one of the hall-marks of the Spirit's ministry is that He leads to the acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord. Never once is it recorded that any of the disciples addressed the Lord by the name Jesus. On the night of His betrayal five of them asked questions, and each followed the same pattern by prefacing their question with "Lord, . . . ." (John 13 : 25, 36, 37; 14 : 5, 8, 22). He had said to them, "If I then, your Lord and Master . . .". In contrast to this, in circles which stress the charismatic gifts, tongues, etc., He is addressed as Jesus, but seldom as Lord or by His full title, Lord Jesus Christ. As noted, the full title occurs five times in the introductory verses of 1 Cor. 1 : 1-9.

The experiences of these excesses do not have a permanent or abiding effect, as is evident from what has happened in the lives of its advocates. Ernest B. Rockstad of "The faith and life ministries Inc., Andover, Kansas," tells of a group of missionaries in Japan, "In the mid-fifties about 30 missionaries from various boards became

involved in a movement in which emphasis was placed on speaking in other tongues, and on seeking for all the gifts of the Spirit. Ten years later only two of the thirty were still in missionary service, and they had departed from emphasis on tongues. Most of the others were out of full-time service for the Lord and were doing work which was far removed from gospel ministry." In his contact with those speaking in tongues he has discovered that some were actually under demoniac power when speaking in tongues, among them a woman who had been a missionary in Africa for 27 years; she had the experience of tongues. When she was delivered from the demon, she could no longer speak in tongues.

"Now there are diversities of gifts . . ." (12 : 4-6) — The resources of the assembly. In these verses each of the persons in the Godhead are mentioned in the same order as in Eph. 4 : 4-6, "One Spirit, One Lord, and One God and Father of all." This is an important portion establishing the Trinitarian doctrine and belief (cf. 2 Cor. 13 : 14; Matt. 28 : 19-20; 1 Pet. 1 : 2-3). Just as each of the Persons is active in the believer's salvation, so the triune God is vitally interested in the spiritual well-being and welfare of the assembly. The assembly's "help cometh from the Lord." These verses form the basis and are a summary of what is developed in chs 12-14. In ch. 12 : 7-11 the gifts of the Spirits are enumerated. He is the one who distributes them. In 12 : 12-31 it is God who puts the individual thus gifted into the body (vs 18, 24, 28), while in 14 : 26-40 the individual thus fitted and placed is to exercise his ministry in subjection to the commandments of the Lord (v. 37). Thus the triunity of the Godhead, as well as the personality, equality and sovereignty of each (vs 11, 18, 28; 14 : 37) are clearly acknowledged. By the use of the words "the same Spirit", "the same Lord", and

"the same God" the apostle indicates that though gift and service and their exercise are different, their origin is the same. Therefore they should not lead to division, nor should they be used for that purpose.

**"The manifestation of the Spirit . . ."** (v. 7) — The responsibility and purpose of all gift. The gifts are different, but the purpose for which each is given is one and the same, the edification or upbuilding of the assembly. They are not for any personal gratification or pre-eminence.

**"For to one is given by the Spirit . . ."** (vs 8-11) — The register of the gifts. This is one of the three portions in the N.T. where gifts and their exercise are referred to and enumerated. The others are Rom. 12:3-8 and Eph. 4:11-16. In the epistle to the Romans the gifts are said to be the **gifts of God**, whereas in Eph. they are said to be the gifts of the **ascended Lord**, and refer to the individual as gifts to the Church. A comparison of the lists in the light of their historical order is instructive.

In Corinthians, the first to be written, there are nine. It is the longest, and in some respects the fullest, in that the miraculous, the spectacular and the sign gifts are prominent. The nine gifts are distributed by the Spirit. In Romans there are seven, and the miraculous and sign gifts are not mentioned. In Eph. only five are mentioned. Again the sign gifts and the temporary gifts are conspicuous by their absence. These differences should not be overlooked as they are important and deeply significant. As in the early history of the nation of Israel the visible token or evidence of God's presence in the cloudy pillar, and the daily provision of the manna both ceased when they entered the land, so it was in the early Church. The first two gifts mentioned were essential while as yet the

Scriptures were not complete. Nothing is said as to the continuity or otherwise of these gifts. On the contrary, in the Ephesian epistle two of the gifts listed, the apostles and the prophets, are stated to be foundation gifts (2 : 20; 4 : 11). In the epistle to the Ephesians as in the letter to the Corinthians the gifts are spoken of in a twofold way. Firstly, the gifts are given to the individuals, and then the individuals are given as gifts to the Church. Then in Eph. 4 : 13 it is clearly stated that the gifts there referred to will continue until the coming of the Lord. But this is not predicated of the gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12-14. These gifts are listed many times in these chapters, and a comparison of these lists is profitable.

#### **List No. 1. (12 : 8-11)**

Some important facts emerge from a study of this list.

1. The gifts listed are supernatural, and therefore not exhaustive. This is evident if we compare them with the ones in Romans and Ephesians. In Romans, for instance, we read of "exhortation" and "giving", and then in 1 Cor. 12 : 28 we read of "teachers", "helps" and "governments", and in Ephesians we read of evangelists and pastors. These ministries are equally dependent upon a divinely imparted gift.
2. Each gift is distributed by the same Spirit. This is emphasized by the seven references to the Spirit in vs 7-11. Four times the words "the same Spirit" are used.
3. Each gift is equally a manifestation of the Spirit. No one gift is specially singled out or in any way specially designated as being more so than any other.

4. No individual is given all the gifts, and not any one of the gifts is given to all alike.
5. It is evident that the gifts are listed in a descending order of value, the more valuable being mentioned first. This is confirmed by a study of all the other lists in this and the other epistles.
6. The use of the word "heteros" for "another" twice in the list is noteworthy. It naturally divides the list into three groups. The first two go together, then the next five, and then the last two. Gift No. 3 is introduced by the word "heteros" and also gift No. 8. The word suggests a person of a different kind, or a different type of person. This suggests that the gifts are distributed according to the person's natural ability and temperamental difference. Doubtless God fits a man by nature for the gift He is to bestow upon him in grace at conversion.
7. The gifts are distributed according to the sovereign will of the Spirit, which implies deity.

#### **List No. 2. (12 : 28)**

In this list 8 are mentioned. They mainly refer to gifted persons. In that way the list bears a similarity to that in Eph. 4 : 11-13.

1. The words "first", "secondarily", "thirdly" and "after that" indicate very clearly that the gifts are listed according to their importance.
2. The apostles were those who had seen and had been commissioned by the Lord. Paul had seen and had been commissioned directly by the Lord (9 : 1; 15 : 8), and had been called by Him (Gal. 1). He had also



performed signs which were the essential credentials of an apostle (2 Cor. 12 : 12; Heb. 4 : 3-4).

3. The prophets. — Like the O.T. prophets the N.T. prophets spoke by revelation as Agabus did. In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, but their ministry has not been recorded. It was therefore provided by the Lord to meet an emergency until the Word of God was completed. The apostles and prophets were thus foundation gifts. They laid and formed the foundation. It is evident that none can claim to be apostles or prophets today. Paul was the last to see the Lord, and through the apostles the Spirit has guided us into all the truth.
4. Teachers. — These are mentioned in the list tabulated in Eph. 4 : 11-13. In apostolic days the apostles were apostles, prophets and teachers. As there were prophets and teachers at Antioch, it is evident that the prophetic and teaching ministry gift could be exercised by one man, while the apostles combined the three.

The responsibility of the teacher was to instruct the Christians in matters of faith and conduct, which must be based upon the Word of God if it is to be authoritative. His position and ministry was comparable to that of the Levite in the O.T. (Deut. 33 : 8-10).

5. "After that". — These words mark out the first three as of primary importance, and the others as of secondary. This is confirmed by the words "better" or "higher" gifts in v. 31.

List No. 3. (12 : 29-30)

Again the apostle follows the same descending order of



value and importance. Each of the seven questions is introduced by the Greek negative which demands a negative answer. But a mere negative answer is not enough, as is evident from the first questions asked. Are all apostles? No, there were but very few. Are all prophets? No, they were also a minority. Are all teachers? No, as then so now there are but few, far too few, a small minority. Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? The answer to these rhetorical questions must be the same as for the first questions. Note must be taken of the word "all" in v. 13 and in 12:30. While all were included in v. 13, the baptism of the Spirit, all did not **speak** with tongues. This completely cancels out the contention that the one and only evidence of having been baptized in the Spirit is speaking with tongues.

#### List No. 4. (13:1-3)

In this chapter the apostle shows that love, the fruit of the Spirit, is more important than any or all the gifts of the Spirit. In this list the order of importance is reversed. They are mentioned in the ascending order.

1. Tongues, whether human or angelic, divorced from love are like sounding brass, like the roaring of the waves (Luke 21:25), or the wailing of the paid mourners (Mk. 5:58), just as a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal, just a deafening nuisance.
2. In v. 2 four gifts are mentioned, prophecy, understanding all mysteries, knowledge, and faith—great faith. Anyone possessing all these would be considered a veritable giant. But apart from love, the fruit of the Spirit, he would be a **zero**, which is not quite so bad as being a nuisance!

3. In v. 3 the apostle scales the height, the very summit of human benevolence and devotion, but if not motivated by love, they would bring no reward. Verse 3 describes what is higher in value than what is seen in vs 1-2.

#### List No. 5. (13 : 8)

The list is now reduced to three, prophecies, tongues, and knowledge. Prophecies or prophesyings refer to the prophetic gift, which was dependent on revelation. The knowledge is also the gift of knowledge. Prophecy and knowledge would be superceded. The words "fail" and "vanish away" are the translation of the same word. They would be annulled, or made redundant or inoperative, as being no longer necessary. The verbs are in the passive voice. They were temporary gifts given to meet an emergency. The word used of tongues — cease — is a different word, and the voice is the future middle voice, indicating that it will cease on its own rather than be rendered inoperative.

#### List No. 6. (13 : 8-10)

In these verses the list is reduced to two, prophesying and knowledge. The omission of tongues is to be noted. It verifies the conclusion that tongues would cease. "This distinction, contextually and grammatically valid, would destroy the thesis that tongues are permanent." (Gromacki in **Modern gift of tongues**. In these two verses, reference is made to that which is partial, and that which is perfect. The partial would be made redundant when the perfect would come. It should be noted that the cessation of tongues was not contingent upon the coming of that which is perfect. As a sign gift it ceased when God's judgment

on Israel was implemented. That it ceased after or at the close of the apostolic age is evident from history. Further comment on this will be found in the notes on ch. 13.

### List No. 7. (v. 12)

Knowledge. See comments on ch. 13:12-13.

**"For as the body is one . . ."** (v. 12). The new relationship. Paul is the only New Testament writer who uses the body as a metaphor of the Church. In this verse it emphasizes its essential **unity**. In this section (12-27) the words "the body" appear 12 times, the "one body" four times, and "body" once (v. 27). The figure is used in Romans 12, Ephesians 1-2, and Colossians 1:18. In these latter epistles the term is used of the Church in its entirety, but in Corinthians it is used of the church in its local aspect as well as in its entirety.

**"For as the body is one . . . so also Christ."** (v. 12). How are we to understand the oneness of the body with the word Christ? Quite obviously it cannot be explained as referring to the Lord in His personal or historical character as in such words as "Christ died for our sins." In Heb. 11:26 we read that "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." This he did by identifying himself with Israel whom he considered to be the Messianic people, the people through whom the Messiah—the Anointed One, or the Christ, was to come. The Messiah was one with His people. In all their afflictions He was afflicted. In a greater and more wonderful way the apostle is referring to the organic unity between Christ the Head and the Church His body. After Eve was formed we read, "God called their name Adam" (Gen. 5:2). The one name stood

for both. The breath of life was not breathed into the nostrils of Eve. She partook of the very life of Adam. They were one as they partook of a common life. So with the Church, she is one with Christ as she partakes of His life. The bond between the head and the body is the indissoluble bond of life. This is the closest bond we read of in the N.T. It is closer than the bond of loyalty which binds the subjects of the kingdom to the king, or the bond of likeness which binds a family together, or even the bond of love between the husband and the wife, for the bond between the head and the body cannot be severed except at the price of death. (See "The Lord and the Churches" by J. M. Davies.)

**"For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body . . ."** (v. 13). The words "in one Spirit" clearly refer to the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 11). The seven references to this subject in the New Testament may be tabulated and classified so that thereby we may glean some instruction regarding it, especially as there is some confusion in the minds of many concerning its nature and significance.

**The Prophetical references.** These are Matt. 3:7-12. Mk. 1:7-8. Luke 3:7-17 John. 1:33. Acts 1:5. The passages in the gospel are the recorded statements of John the Baptizer, while the one in the Acts was spoken by the Lord just prior to his ascension. From a study of these passages the following conclusions are apparent.

1. The words of John were fulfilled during our Lord's ministry, but would be "not many days" after his ascension. It was to follow his exaltation. The Lord's words must be understood as referring to what was to take place on the day of Pentecost.
2. The Lord would be the baptizer according to the words

of John. But the preposition "en" in Acts 1.5 could be rendered "by".

3. Baptism in fire is only associated with it in the two passages where he addresses the Pharisees and Saducees as a "generation of vipers," and urges them to bring forth fruit meet for repentance. When John addressed those whom he had baptized (Mk. 1.7) he makes no reference to baptism in fire. And when the Lord speaks to his disciples no mention is made of fire. The other occurrences of the word "fire" in John's message clearly refer to judgment. The tree was to be cast into the fire as also the chaff.

4. The baptism "in the Spirit" was not to be limited to the Lord's disciples. The words of John indicate that all whom he had baptized would be baptized in the Spirit.

5. There is no hint in any of the prophetic passages that being baptized in the Spirit would be accompanied by some outward or visible sign.

**The historical references.** The one occasion in which reference is made to it in the book of the Acts is ch. 11:15-16 in which Peter parallels the unique and unparalleled experience in the house of Cornelius with that of the apostles on the day of Pentecost. Peter's words make it clear that what happened was not the normal experience when the gospel had been preached, but being the first time the gospel was preached to the Gentiles God authenticated it by repeating what had taken place at Pentecost.

**The doctrinal reference.** We are limited to one passage. The verse states "In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether . . . . . and were all made to drink of (or into) one Spirit. As both verbs are in the past or



aorist tense, they both refer to an initial or initiatory experience, of which all true Christians, not a select few, partake. This experience had its counterpart in the history of the nation of Israel (10 : 1-4). It happened at the commencement of their national life as a redeemed people. Two of the six privileges or blessings mentioned are relevant to a consideration of what is stated in 12 : 13. "All were baptized unto Moses in the cloud . . . and did all drink of the same spiritual drink." A consideration of the differences between these two will provide us with some guide lines which will enable us to understand and interpret the words of 12 : 13. Some self-evident differences between the baptizing and the drinking in Israel's experience should be noted.

1. The baptism was a historical event, never repeated, whereas the drinking was both an initial and a continuous experience.
2. The baptism unto Moses was corporate and national, whereas the drinking was individual.
3. The baptism was positional. It brought them into a new and very definite relationship with Moses as their "ruler and deliverer". The drinking was experimental; it quenched their thirst.
4. In the baptism they were passive, but in the drinking they were active.
5. The baptism unto Moses was something which they were not actually conscious of, whereas the opposite is the case with the drinking. There are many things we only know because God has revealed them, and we accept them as facts on that basis. History records the death of Christ, but it is revelation that declares that He died for our sins.



The words of our Lord (Acts 1 : 5) indicate clearly that the baptism in the Spirit would take place "not many days hence", an evident reference to the day of Pentecost. But as the words "baptized in the Spirit" are not used when describing the events of that eventful day, some consider that it is to be understood as synonymous with the word "filled" (Acts 2 : 4). However, a comparative study of the portions where the words are used does not allow of this interpretation (cf. the 'nine references where the word "filled" is used in the Acts, also Eph. 5 : 18).

It is a safe principle of interpretation that symbols used in the same passage should be explained in the same way. One cannot be interpreted as ceremonial and the other spiritual. If the baptism is accepted as water baptism, then the drinking must be understood as referring to the drinking of the cup at the Supper. But only a deep-dyed ritualist would accept that. Then the fact that the verb "made to drink" is in the aorist cancels out such a view of the verse. It is rather an echo of John 7 : 37-39 and John 4 : 10-15.

The "baptism in the Spirit" then is the doctrinal explanation of Acts 1 : 5, and refers to the formation of the Church as the body of Christ on the day of Pentecost. The words "whether we be Jews or Gentiles . . ." (cf. Acts chs 2, 10, 19) confirm this interpretation, and establish that all racial, national, social and natural (male and female) differences are cancelled in so far as membership in the body of Christ is concerned. The use of the word "all" twice emphasizes this and shows how divisions and strife deny this essential oneness. True fellowship as members of the one body is based on the possession of a common life and submission to a common authority, the one head. Thus the passage speaks of the formation, the fellowship and functioning of the Christian assembly.

**“For the body is not one member, but many.”** (vs 14-17). The recognition of others. Just as vs 12-13 emphasize the unity of the body, this underlines its **diversity**, or the diversity between its many members, illustrating the diversity between the gifts listed. Each member is different and has a different function to perform. The idea of a body dependent on or consisting only of one member is something totally contrary to what obtains in nature. These verses show how interdependent the members of the body are. Five members are mentioned or singled out, the foot, the hand, the eye, the ear, and the nose as being the more prominent, as being always before the public. Each is fitted for its own work. Therefore there should be no **envy** on the part of the foot or the ear. It is sad when a person attempts to do a work for which he has not been fitted of God. But as there should be no envy, so there should be no **monopoly**, for if the whole were an eye, where would be the hearing? A body such as is envisaged in v. 17 would be a fit object for a museum! The questions in these verses concern these five pairs of members, two feet, two hands, two eyes, two ears, and two nostrils. They are like ten deacons each serving the body. Cowper wrote a poem — unpublished — on the court case convened to establish who was the real owner of the glasses. The counsel for the nose argued so strongly that the magistrate gave the verdict in favour of the nose. So the eyes should be closed when the man wore the glasses, with the sad consequence that he fell and broke his nose! So there should be no **independency**, as the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of thee.” And in view of the fact that the seemingly less feeble are necessary, there should be no **superiority**. The part that is less prominent is clothed, it is given more honour; and so the believer who may lack gift may be adorned with grace. This was a lesson the Corinthians

and many today need to learn. Grace is more important than gift, for gift is only for time, whereas grace is eternal. The best of gifts, like the manna, may breed worms, but grace never. The head must refer to the master organ of the body — the brain, the seat of authority. It controls all the members alike, the feet, the eyes, and the ears, etc.

“The brain is more complicated and more wonderful than any machine ever built. From our eyes, ears, nose and skin, the brain receives messages that tell us what is going on in the world around us. The brain also receives a steady stream of signals from other body organs that enable it to control our life processes. The brain controls the beating of the heart, hunger and thirst. Every time we blink, the brain must first send to the muscles of the eyelids the instructions. Our emotions, our fears, hate and love all begin in the brain.” (World book Encyclopedia).

“But God hath set . . .” (vs 28-30). The inclusion of apostles and prophets in the list would indicate that the word church is to be understood in a local sense. Then there is no reference to any priestly office. Such an office was a later invention. The gifts enumerated fall into four categories. There are the foundation gifts — apostles and prophets — New Testament prophets. There are temporary gifts such as prophecy, tongues and knowledge. Then there were the sign gifts such as tongues and healing (Mark 16 : 17-18). Then the permanent gifts, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4 : 11-15).

“But covet earnestly . . .” (v. 31). The reproof, re-monstration and exhortation. Whereas in the disposing of these gifts God is sovereign, yet the believer is exhorted to covet earnestly the better or higher gifts. These are the gifts which edify and build up the assembly and the

spiritual life of its members (cf. 14 : 12). But greater than all gifts and absolutely essential to their proper functioning is the more excellent way, the way of love marked out for us in the lyric on love in ch. 13.

## **The Christian Assembly and its ministry (11 : 2-15 : 11).**

### **B. Churchward (continued).**

#### **The lyric on love (ch. 13).**

This chapter, a spiritual masterpiece, though somewhat parenthetical in character, cannot be considered a parenthesis, as it is such a vitally important link between chs 12 and 14. Moreover its teaching bears upon the whole epistle. In it the apostle insists upon the supreme importance of love as being the absolutely essential prerequisite for the exercise of gift. It takes pre-eminence above any and all gifts. The love considered is the "love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5 : 5). It is the first mentioned of the nine graces which constitute the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5 : 22-23. The word used is not "eros", the love between man and woman, or "phileo", human love and affection, but "agape", Divine love.

"Though I speak . . ." (vs 1-3). In these verses the relative value of love is summed very graphically. It is the surpassing value of love that is emphasized in them. It may be compared to the gold reserves of a nation. Without it its paper currency would be worthless. Note the seven things mentioned in these verses and the three-fold conclusion to the threefold division. Note the gradation. Tongues, whether human or angelic, are mentioned first, and the two illustrations used of the exercise of the

gift without, or not motivated by love, put them into the lowest grade. (See list 3).

Even four of the major gifts, if not exercised by the constraining power of love, are totally ineffective. By the Spirit's computer they are a big zero.

- a. Prophecy. This refers to the gift of prophesying, speaking by revelation.
- b. Understanding all mysteries, that is, all the mysteries mentioned in the New Testament, such as the "mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16); the mystery of the outcalling of the Church, and of Israel's blindness (Eph. 3:3-9; Rom. 11:25) and others.
- c. Knowledge. This refers to the true gnosis which the Corinthians had been enriched with (1:5).
- d. Faith. This refers to the gift of faith, faith that accomplishes great things, removes mountains. It is more than the saving faith which every believer has exercised, and which is essential to salvation (Heb. 11:6).

In v. 3 two things which would be considered to be acts of great devotion are mentioned. "Go and sell all that thou hast . . ." was the acid test of discipleship demanded by the Lord, recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. If I give, not only my goods to the poor, but my body to be burned, like Daniel's companions, it would seem to be the acme of consecration. Yet if not actuated by love there would be no gain, no reward.

**"Love suffereth long and is kind . . ." (vs 4-7).** In these verses we have the surpassing virtues of love. Here we have love crystallized and viewed against the background of the conflicts of life, both personal and communal. It is



love in the midst of problems and perplexities. It is active in inhospitable and difficult environments and circumstances. If we follow the A.V., there are seven positive statements and seven negative ones, suggestive of perfection, the perfection of the love of God in action or displayed. Turbulent waters and an atmosphere polluted by envy and strife gives the opportunity for love to manifest itself. If we follow the R.S.V., we will find five positives and five negative statements. They may be considered as the two tables of the law of love.

The whole chapter is a study in spiritual profit and loss. The word "profit" is an important one in this section (cf. 14 : 6). The failures of the Corinthians as revealed in the preceding chapters were due to the fact that these virtues, which are inherent in the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of believers, were not being manifested in their lives. Love is patient and humble, not self-assertive. It does not vaunt itself, nor is puffed up, neither does it envy, nor is it easily offended. It does not keep a diary of personal offences. It does not behave itself unseemly. In this way all the preceding chapters seem to come under review (cf. 3 : 3; 4 : 8, 18; 5 : 1; 6 : 1-10; 10 : 23; 11 : 17-22). Love, then, is not some soft, sentimental feeling, but something very practical in its outworking. It gets no satisfaction from evil tidings, but rejoices in the gospel, the truth.

**"Love never faileth . . ." (vs 8-13).** The surpassing superiority of love over all gifts and graces is brought into focus in these verses. It is permanent. It abides eternally. The three gifts mentioned in v. 8 were temporary. Tongues would cease, whereas knowledge and prophecies would be annulled, rendered inoperative. These were temporary operations of the Spirit, limited to apostolic days. On the other hand love, as the fruit of the Spirit,



would remain. Over against the three temporary gifts of v. 8 we have the three permanent graces of v. 13. In vs 9-10 reference is made to that which is partial, and that which is perfect. Tongues are not included, as it is definitely stated that they would cease. There would be no purpose in singling out tongues as going to cease if the cessation was to coincide with the coming of the Lord; for then all gifts will cease to operate or be made redundant. As they only knew in part, they could only prophesy in part. But the partial knowledge was to be superseded by perfect or complete knowledge. This is a very controversial passage. Three explanations are suggested, which should be briefly considered.

1. "That which is perfect" is thought to refer to the perfect state, at the consummation, when time will merge into eternity at the coming of the Lord. There are at least two serious objections to this interpretation of the verse.

(a) Dr. Gromacki in his book "The Modern Gift of Tongues" has pointed out that the word perfect is not used of the eternal state. Then why should it be thought of as referring to the future state here? The perfect is not set over against the imperfect, but against the partial. Partial knowledge is not of necessity imperfect or erroneous, even though it is limited or incomplete.

(b) If partial knowledge is to be superseded by perfect knowledge, what is partial prophesying to be superseded by? Will there be any prophesying in the future state? The answer must be satisfactory to the problem of prophesying as well as of knowledge.

2. The attainment of Christian perfection. The word is used of this in at least two ways in the N.T. In

Hebrews 6 : 1 we are exhorted to go on to perfection, that is, to enter into and live in the enjoyment of the perfection which is ours in virtue of the perfect sacrifice of Christ (10 : 14). Then Paul says that he had not attained to a perfection of life. He was still pursuing it (Phil. 3 : 12). But this is not satisfactory either, even though the apostle does draw a comparison between the child and the man later in the chapter (cf. 2 : 6; 14 : 20). But the words "in part" cannot be explained as referring to an immature state.

3. When the canon of Scripture is completed. "Logically the words "in that which is perfect" must refer to completeness in the same realm as that referred to in the words "in part". Since these words (in part) refer to the transmission of divine truth by revelation, the other term (that which is perfect) must refer to God's complete revelation of truth -- the entire N.T."

"The word perfect means that something which is partially here, is developing, and some day will become complete. This word fits the concept of progressive revelation (John 14 : 26; 16 : 13)." (Dr. Gromacki). Paul's two illustrations confirm this conclusion.

(a) **Infancy and maturity** (v. 11). Two stages of periods. "In spake . . . I understood (felt) . . . I reasoned." Some commentators see in these three words a veiled reference to the three temporary gifts of v. 8. Later (14 : 20) they are exhorted not to be children in understanding, ". . . infants . . . men." They should be mature.

The change from infancy to maturity is a process which takes time and is progressive. It is not a sudden change, such as is envisaged in 1 Cor. 15 : 51

at the coming of the Lord. In the days of Israel as an infant nation in the wilderness the miraculous was very much in evidence.

- (b) **The mirror**, or dim window, and face to face. The two views or visions. On the word mirror J.N. Darby has the following footnote, "That is, through some medium which in some degree hinders vision. The word also means mirror, but it is used for a window through which men looked at objects outside the house. They were made, not of clear transparent glass, as now, but of some semi-transparent material." If the word is to be understood as a mirror, it would refer to a metal mirror, which would not give a clear reflection, but rather a distorted one. The word "darkly" emphasizes this. In the LXX it is used of dark speeches (Num. 12 : 8; Prov. 1 : 6).

In 1 Cor. 13 : 12 it is the word "enigma" that is used. It suggests a riddle, something intimated obscurely. This was the method and purpose of the parables of (cf. Matt. 13 : 33-35).

The words "face to face" are used in Num. 1 : 28 of the way God spoke to Moses, in contrast to the way He spoke to the nation (cf. Exod. 33 : 11; Deut. 34 : 10). It is not used in the New Testament with reference to the coming of the Lord, and there is no direct or even an indirect reference to the coming of the Lord in this verse (1 Cor. 13 : 12). Altogether in these verses we have three contrasts, (1) The partial and the perfect or complete, (2) The infant and the mature state, and (3) The obscure and the clear vision. The analogy between Israel in the wilderness and Joshua entering the land is very relevant. In the wilderness there was the guidance

of the cloudy pillar, but Joshua was exhorted to meditate and be guided by the book (Josh. 1:8).

**"Now I know in part . . ."** (v. 12). It is only knowledge that is referred to in this verse, and the apostle uses the word for "perfect knowledge", whereas previously he had used the word for knowledge. The word used is suggestive of a personal knowledge of God rather than the gift of knowledge (12:8). Our personal knowledge of God is limited, not because of limited revelation, but because of our limited capacity. In the future we shall know as we have been known.

**"And now abideth faith, hope and love . . ."** (v. 13). This triad of three graces are often referred to in the N.T. (Rom. 5:1-5; Eph. 4:2-5; Heb. 6:10-18; 10:22-24; 1 Pet. 1:1-3). There may be a correspondence between them and the three permanent gifts mentioned in Eph. 4:8-13. The evangelist appeals to faith, the teacher begets hope, and the pastor seeks to cultivate love. But the three are very closely interrelated. They are like the three daughters of Job of whom we read, "In all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job" (Job 42:18).

Whereas it is correct to say that faith will give place to sight, and hope to realization, yet faith in the sense of trust and confidence in God will surely remain, even as there will be a permanent anticipation of all that the unending ages will unveil or unfold for our wonder and worship. Love is the greatest because it is the outflow of the heart of God, for God is love. "In contrast with the temporary gifts these three graces, faith hope and love, endure forever." (F. F. Bruce).

## 5. The Christian Assembly and its ministry (11 : 2-15 : 11).

### B. Churchward. (continued)

**"Follow . . . after love . . . covet spiritual gifts . . ."** (14 : 1-25). In the light of what is said in ch. 13 there is to be a constant pursuit of love. It is superior to any and all gifts. Spiritual gifts were to be earnestly desired or coveted, more especially prophesying because of its superior value, rather than tongues which the apostle shows to be inferior in value. Of the spiritual gifts these two are singled out and compared and contrasted in the chapter. The two gifts are clearly differentiated as to their relative value. Unless interpreted, the gift of tongues was of no value to the individual (vs. 13-14), or to the assembly (vs. 5, 6, 13), and it would be detrimental to the gospel because of its adverse affect on the unconverted (v. 23).

Although the gifts are not actually defined, sufficient is said as to enable us to arrive at a definition. The gift of tongues—glossolalia—was rather enigmatic, but from what is recorded of it in this chapter and in the Acts it may be stated or defined as the Spirit-given ability to speak, or pray, or praise in a language not known by the individual (cf. Acts 2 : 6; 1 Cor. 14 : 13). Nevertheless it was a definite and distinct human language (14 : 9-11). It was not some barnyard gibberish, or some incoherent ecstatic utterance. The gift of prophecy on the other hand was a special enabling to communicate to men a revelation received from the Lord, not of necessity concerning some future event (cf. 11 : 23-25). It was profitable to the assembly for edification, exhortation and comfort (14 : 3), and to the conversion of the unconverted (14 : 24). Moses and Aaron were both prophets, but of a totally different character. Moses received revelations direct from the Lord, whereas Aaron was Moses' prophet



or spokesman (Exod. 7:1). He retold, as it were, what Moses had received. This is the only way anyone may prophesy today. It differs from teaching, though the latter should partake of a prophetic character, bringing a message from God suiting the existing need and condition.

**“For he that speaketh in a tongue . . .”** (vs. 2-13). **Tongues limited as to their value to the assembly.** As with the previous problems and factions the apostle does not meet the glossolalia zealots in a head-on collision, but first he **reasons** with them, then he **reprimands** them strongly (v. 20), and finally **regulates** the exercise of the gifts in the assembly (vs. 26-40). He views tongues positively and then negatively, both commendably and critically or condemnatory. Positively or commendably he tabulates three values. These are communion with God (v. 2); communication of mysteries or hitherto unrevealed truth (v. 2); and personal edification (v. 4). Negatively they could not edify the assembly unless they were interpreted (vs. 5, 13), and there would be no profit if they were not the channel for communicating a prophetic revelation, or teaching based on knowledge. The four words in v. 6 are thus bracketed into two pairs, revelation with prophecy, and teaching with knowledge. This verse explains the use of the word “mysteries”, “edifying the assembly” and “edifying others” (vs. 3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26). The assembly is not the place for the display of any natural talent, but for the godly exercise of spiritual gift. It is not the place for entertainment or amusement, but for spiritual edification. In contrast to the limited value of tongues to the assembly, prophesying fulfilled a three-fold purpose and met a three-fold need, edification, encouragement and comfort (v. 3). Christians need to be built up in the faith, and they need to be

stirred up to possess their possessions (Obad. 17; Josh. 18 : 3), and cheered up in their days of sorrow and grief (Isa. 40 : 1; 1 Thess. 4 : 13-18).

**“And even things without life . . .”** (vs. 7-13). Three inanimate instruments are mentioned, the flute, the harp and the trumpet. The first two are capable of producing distinctive tunes if played by one who is trained in the art, while the trumpet effectively blown will awaken, arrest and alarm, but in the hands of the novice or uninitiated can only produce discordant notes and weird noises. This illustration the apostle applies to the exercise of the gift of tongues and the subtle danger involved in their use. The Corinthians were very “zealous of spirits” (v. 12). A different word is used to that in 12 : 1 and 14 : 1, and as Gentiles they were in danger of confounding the actions of demons with those of the Holy Spirit. The wily enemy took advantage of their zeal combined with their ignorance, which resulted in an imitation of the gift of tongues, an unintelligible speech, a mere gibberish. So the apostle warns them that every voice or language has certain linguistic features which are common to all languages. Again they are exhorted to give preference and precedence to the edifying of the assembly. For this purpose anyone who possessed the gift of tongues should pray for the gift of interpretation (v. 13).

**“For if I pray in a tongue . . .”** (vs. 14-20). **Tongues limited as to their value to the individual.** (The word “unknown” used many times in the section is not in the text, as is evident by the fact that it is printed in italics. However, it serves to give the impression—a correct one—that the language spoken was unknown to the one who was using it.) In this passage reference is made to “praying”, “singing”, “praising and giving of thanks” in

an unknown language, but while his spirit is thus functioning, his understanding is unfruitful. In these seven verses the word understanding appears no less than seven times. There can be no spiritual edification to the individual if he does not understand what he says. This, of necessity, qualifies the words of v. 4, that is, the words "he edifieth himself" will only be true if he understands what he says. In the parable of the seed and the sower the Lord underlined the importance of the hearer understanding the message (cf. Matt. 13:22; Eph. 5:11; Titus 3:14; Jude 12; 2 Pet. 1:8). In his unconverted state man's "understanding is darkened" (Eph. 4:18). The man who prayed, or praised, or gave thanks, led the assembled company as their representative, hence the others said Amen as being in agreement with him, but the Christian who was uninitiated, as it were, or if he did not understand the tongue, could not say Amen. The words "in the room of the unlearned" do not lend any support to the idea of a back seat. They refer to a spiritual state rather than a physical position. As Paul spoke in tongues, the zealots could not charge him with envy. The comparison between five words with the understanding and 10,000 in a tongue, an unknown language, could hardly be stronger. The value of a message depended on the instruction it imparted. Having reasoned with them and shown the limited value of the gift, he administers a sharp rebuke in v. 20. In spiritual understanding they were not to be small children, but men. However, in malice they were to be babes.

**"In the law it is written . . ." (vs. 21-25). The gift of tongues limited as to its sign value.** The term "law" is used in a general way of the Old Testament in the epistle (cf. 7:39; 9:8, 20; 14:21, 34; 15:55). The quotation in v. 21 is from Isaiah 28:11. It is an echo of an earlier

prophecy (Deut. 28 : 29), and is referred to also by Jeremiah (5 : 15). As Israel failed to hear the word of God, they would come under judgment, and the "foreign tongues" would be a sign of this judgment, a sign that the nation would be sent to captivity in Assyria and Babylon. The prophetic passages make it clear that the sign was to Israel, and that it was a sign of judgment, a sign that the nation would be punished and set aside. It had its initial fulfilment in the days of Shalmanaser and Nebuchadnezzar, but the apostle applies it to the gift of tongues as a sign gift, a sign to unbelieving Israel, and a sign of God's present displeasure in their dispersion among the nations. It is definitely stated that "tongues are a sign not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (v. 22). Therefore it is false to state or teach that it is a sign to the believer that he has received the Spirit or has been baptized in the Spirit. While tongues were a sign to unbelievers, prophecy was a sign to believers, a sign that He was still speaking to them. It was a sad day when God ceased to raise up prophets in Israel. While tongues were a sign of judgment, prophecy was a sign of blessing, and evidence of His continuing mercy.

**"The unlearned or unbelievers . . ."** (v. 23). **Tongues a hindrance to the gospel.** Gentiles are spoken of as "those who know not God" (2 Thess. 1 : 8), and Jews are referred to as unbelievers in vs. 21-22. While in v. 16 the "unlearned" is clearly a Christian, in v. 23 both are non-Christians.

**"How is it then, brethren . . ."** (vs 26-40). The gifts were regulated and restricted as to their exercise in the assembly. In this important section directions are given as to the conduct of their assembly gatherings when the

whole assembly would come together in one place (vs 23, 26). Within the compass of fifteen verses there are fourteen verbs in the imperative mood, fourteen commandments. The word "let" is to be understood as a command. These commandments are grouped into seven. There was no individual appointed to be in charge.

1. **"Let all things be done unto edifying . . ."** (v. 26). There was no human control, and no one was to assume complete responsibility. But it was not an any or every man ministry, but a many man ministry as illustrated in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1). As there was liberty for brethren to take part, this was unfortunately at times abused. The saints were thereby subjected to unprofitable ministry. Hence the apostle is very emphatic that edification was to be the aim of all ministry. This fundamentally important principle was to guide all who would take part. Attention has already been drawn to the many occurrences of the word in the chapter. Of the five things listed in the verse one refers to teaching, or the teacher, one to tongues, and one to the prophet with a revelation. With such a profusion of gift, how essential it was to recognize the Spirit's control and the importance of these injunctions, for the flesh is always restlessly active.

2. **"If any man speak in a tongue . . ."** (vs 27-28). Only two or at the most three were to speak, and that by turn, not simultaneously, as seemingly they did, and then only if there was an interpreter present. If there was no interpreter, he was to keep silence. He must not be the helpless pawn of his emotions and driven to take part against his will. There was to be complete self-control. It is an evil spirit that dethrones the will and possesses



the individual. The Holy Spirit fills and thus ennoble the person.

3. **"Let the prophets speak . . ."** (vs 29-33). The same restriction as to number 2 is repeated in v. 29 — two or three, but this is qualified in v. 31. The others, probably the other prophets, but possibly the word embraces more than the prophets, were to judge if what was said was in accordance with the analogy of the Faith (Rom. 12:6). By such prophesying they would learn and be strengthened. The prophets were also to exercise complete self-control. No servant of God should abdicate his will. That would introduce confusion, a loss of peace and harmony. It is instructive to note that no prophetesses are mentioned. Surely, if there were any, they would be so designated.

4. **"As in all the churches of the saints . . ."** (33b-36). These verses relate to the place and behaviour of sisters in the assembly. The instructions regarding not being allowed to speak, and to keep silence, are confirmed by the teaching given later by the apostle in 1 Tim. 2:5-15. The word "silence" is used of the prophets in v. 30 and is to be interpreted in the same way here. It is not to be understood as a prohibition against chattering, a meaning inconsistent with its use in its many occurrences in this chapter (vs 2-6 . . .) and everywhere else in the New Testament. Furthermore, why should women be prohibited from chattering? Was it permissible for men? The words "as in all churches of the saints" (v. 33) are better understood as connected with what follows (vs 34-36). The words are suggestive of what was a common practice in the Christian assemblies in apostolic days (cf. 4:17; 7:17; 10:16). Such New Testament assemblies are designated as "churches of God" (10:32) and "churches of Christ"

(Rom. 16 : 16), and here as the "churches of the saints". They are not to be used as denominational tags or names. It would seem that the women in the assembly at Corinth were exercising an unusual liberty, a precursor of the modern "women's lib" by failing to recognize their God-ordained place of subjection. Doubtless they were among the foremost of the glossolia zealots. The words "as also saith the law" are a reference to Gen. 3 : 16, the judgment passed upon the woman for her part in the transgression. The sharp rebuke in v. 36 suggests that the assembly in Corinth was encouraging them in this. Hence the assembly is strongly censured. As an assembly it had no authority to formulate or teach doctrine. The Church, as such, never formulates or promulgates doctrine. It is the recipient of doctrine. This is important in view of the pretentious claims of Rome, and the tendency of many Protestant denominations, to make their creeds authoritarian.

In summary note the five restrictions placed on tongues.

1. Only two or three at the most.
2. Only by course, or one at a time.
3. Only if there was an interpreter present.
4. Only under complete self-control. He must be able to keep silence.
5. Only to be exercised by men.

5. "If any man think himself . . ." (vs 37-49). In Corinth there were those who did not acknowledge Paul as an apostle. Some of these made high claims to gift and spirituality, so the apostle asserts that what he was teaching was by the commandment of the Lord. This is not a reference to anything that the Lord had taught, but to the authoritative character of what he was teaching. It is a

clear claim to inspiration. Just as gift is valued or assessed by the measure in which it edifies, so spirituality is assessed by the measure in which the individual submits to the Lordship of Christ as expressed in these commandments. The wilfully ignorant must be left to his proud ignorance. There are none so ignorant as those who will not be taught, those who will not listen to instruction, those who think they know it all! In v. 39 the relative value of the two gifts, that of prophecy, and that of tongues, is again very forcibly emphasized. The one was to be coveted, while the other was not to be prohibited. The injunctions were relevant then, but not now (cf. 13 : 8-10).

6. **"Let all things be done decently and in order"** (v. 40), or with decorum. There should be no confusion. There is ample evidence from the epistle that this was a very needed word of exhortation. Modest behaviour and godly order should characterize the assembly as the house of God.

7. **"Let all things be done with love . . ."** (16 : 14). This exhortation may be added here for completeness. Love was to be the motivating power. It seeks the good of others.

As there has been of recent years a resurgence of interest in the more spectacular gifts, more especially in tongues, and significantly enough less in the gift of prophesying it is necessary to give some further consideration to the gift of tongues and to the relevance of the instructions in ch. 14 to the conduct of the gatherings of a Christian assembly today.

1. **The gift of tongues.** Some limitations placed upon it in the New Testament.

### **1. It was limited as to its manifestations.**

Altogether there are only three occurrences of its manifestation in the book of the Acts. Ch. 2. The twelve apostles. Ch. 10 Cornelius. Ch. 19. The 12 Grecian disciples at Ephesus. There is no mention of it in connection with the conversion of the 3000 on the day of Pentecost, or with the work in Judea, and Samaria, or in the conversion of the Eunuch or of Saul, nor do we read of it in connection with the visit to Philippi, and Thessalonica, or in the spiritually virile company at Antioch. While it later appeared in the assembly at Corinth nothing is said regarding it at the commencement of the work as an accompaniment of the preaching of the gospel. The instances where it was manifested reveal a special purpose when considered in the light of the reference to Jews and Greek, bond and free in 1 Cor 12-13. It pleased God to give one illustration from each to show that in the church Jews and Gentiles are alike members of the body of Christ. The law of single reference must be taken into consideration. Only once did fire fall from heaven to destroy cities. Compare also the case of Nadab and Abihu, Achan, the man who broke the Sabbath, Ananias and Sapphira. These are singular acts to establish and illustrate Divine principles.

### **2. It is limited in the reference to it in the lists of gifts.**

It is only mentioned in the Corinthian epistle. No reference to it in the essential qualifications for an elder in Timothy or Titus.

### **3. It was limited in its distribution.**

They were distributed according to the sovereign will of the Spirit. They were not distributed to all alike. 1 Cor. 12 : 9-11. And from a consideration of the rhetorical questions in 12 : 29-30 it is very evident that the recipients

were a small minority, even as the apostles were a very small minority.

In his book on the Holy Spirit Prof. F. D. Brunner quotes fairly extensively from Pentecostal writings and draws attention to their statement that the first person to seek and receive tongues as the proof of having received the baptism in the Spirit was a young woman named Agnes Oozman. This is confirmed by Dr. Hoekema in his book on Tongues. That has become the main plank in the teaching of Pentecostalism ever since. Thus a woman's experience lies at the foundation of Pentecostal teaching. In this respect it is similar to Christian Science and Seventh Day Adventism.

#### **4. It was limited in its purpose.**

It was one of the sign gifts, a sign to Israel, and a sign of judgment on the nation, and a sign that the gospel was to be preached universally. This was demonstrated to those who were with Peter in the house of Cornelius.

#### **5. It was limited as to its duration.**

1 Cor. 13:8. Tongues shall cease, a clear indication that it was a temporary gift. Comp. Joshi 1:8. In the wilderness Israel had the Manna and the pillar of cloud to guide them, they did not have a book to guide them, but when they had the book the miraculous ceased.

#### **6. It was limited as to its value.**

In comparison with the other gifts, the last mentioned and the least in value. 1 Cor. 12:9-11, 29-31. Of no value to the individual, or to the assembly unless interpreted. 14:14. Detrimental in its effect on the unsaved. 1 Cor. 14:17.

#### **7. It was limited as to its exercise. See notes on 1 Cor. 14:26-40.**



The relevance of the instructions of ch. 14 to post-apostolic and present day conditions. As the miraculous gifts were limited to the days of the apostles, and as the instructions in ch. 14 were intended to regulate the conduct of church gatherings in the days when the spectacular gifts were being distributed, it might well be asked what relevance do they have to the conditions which have prevailed since. Are there any basic principles incorporated in the instructions which are age-abiding? Or are we to jetizon the chapter as having no application to the present. As all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof and correction, the chapter cannot be treated as some unnecessary excess baggage. The principles laid down are applicable today and form a pattern for all gatherings of a Christian assembly.

1. The paramount importance of love. v. 1. Without this as shown in ch. 13 any and all gifts will not only be of no value, but will breed corruption like the Manna did when it was hoarded.
2. The supreme importance of edification. Note the many times the word is used in the chapter, and especially v. 26. Both ministry and thanksgiving should be edifying. The value of a gift is to be assessed by the measure in which believers are edified.
3. The importance of understanding. v. 9, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20. The message must be understood if it is to be a help and blessing.
4. Importance of consideration for others, the unlearned and the unsaved. The spiritual needs of such should always be kept in mind, hence the value of a variety of gift.
5. Importance of liberty for the exercise of both priestly

ministry and the ministry of the word to the saints.  
v. 17, 26.

6. Importance of controlled liberty, controlled by the commandments of the Lord embodied in v. 26-40. This is true theocracy.

7. Importance of spirituality. v. 37. Where this is lacking anarchy will take the place of theocracy as it did in Israel in the days of the Judges, and that will be followed by monarchical rule, the rule of man.

**The Christian Assembly and its ministry (11 : 2-15 : 11).**

**C. To the World — In the Gospel (15 : 1-11).**

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel . . .”, or the evangel which I evangelized (v. 1). As some in Corinth had vitiated the gospel, or robbed it of its glory, by denying the resurrection of the dead, the apostle sets on record the gospel, the glad tidings which he had announced among them. Paul’s statement is the pattern or full gospel. The passage is not directly connected with the instruction in the preceding chapters regarding gifts (12-14). However, in view of the unscriptural emphasis being laid by many on tongues as being the God-ordained seal of having received the Holy Spirit, or the baptism in the Spirit, it is important to note the unfettered simplicity of faith, or receiving the gospel, as being the sole basis of the believer’s standing before God in Christ. Salvation is through Christ, and Christ alone. It is not Christ plus anything, whether it be circumcision, baptism, or tongues. The gospel introduces the believer into a righteous standing before God in Christ. Christ is the impregnable rock foundation upon which he stands (3 : 10; Ps. 40 : 2).

“by which ye are saved . . .” (v. 2). It is instructive to note the various tenses of the verb “saved” in the New

Testament. They portray four aspects of salvation. The past tense refers to a time when a person is saved (2 Tim. 1 : 9). The perfect tense as in Eph. 2 : 8 refers to the permanent, abiding effect of that past act. Then the present continuous tense as in 1 Cor. 1 : 18; 15 : 2 refers to a daily experimental salvation. The verb is also used in its future tense in Rom. 5 : 9; 1 Thess. 1 : 10; 5 : 9. The past and the perfect speak of salvation from the penalty of sin through the death of Christ. The present refers to our daily salvation from the seductive power of sin, and is connected with the high priestly ministry of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The future is associated with the coming of the Lord and the redemption of the body.

**“unless ye have believed in vain.”** Those in Corinth who denied the resurrection did not realize the seriousness of such a denial. They had received the gospel, but the evident conclusion of such a denial would be that their faith was not true or genuine, but superficial and valueless — vain. There are three words translated “vain” in the chapter with regard to the gospel. If Christ be not risen, the gospel message would be worthless or valueless, like a promissory note of no value (v. 2). It would also be powerless or fruitless (v. 14), as it would contain no dynamic power to transform lives. Moreover it would be meaningless (v. 17), a mere superstition, an old wives’ fable.

**“For I delivered unto you first of all . . .”** (vs 3-5) — as being first in importance. Elsewhere the apostle affirms that he had received it as a revelation from the Lord (Gal. 1 : 18). It was not something which he had received from man. He considered that he had received it as a stewardship, like the one pound spoken of in the parable

(Luke 19:12-13). It had been delivered to them also as a solemn stewardship. In the light of this we might well ask ourselves if we are hiding it under a bushel or under a bed. Are we allowing business or pleasure to take precedence over the claims of the gospel? (Luke 8:16).

Four elements of the gospel are particularized a) Christ died; b) Christ was buried; c) Christ is risen, and d) He was seen or appeared to chosen witnesses (Acts 10:41). The first three are the basic, fundamental, historical facts, the fourth is evidential.

**The historical, redemptive facts.** The Christian's faith is based on incontrovertable facts.

a) **"Christ died . . ."**. In Paul's brief statement of the gospel two important truths are stated. It was a sacrificial death in fulfilment of the prophetic foreshadowings and direct prophecies of the Old Testament. As a sacrificial death it was propitiatory in that it pacified the wrath of God by exonerating the law, and satisfying the demands of righteousness. That was its Godward aspect (Rom. 3:25). It was expiatory in that it put away our sins, which was its manward aspect. And it must ever be remembered that it was voluntary in the absolute sense of the word. He laid down His life. He was never a dying man, or in the process of dying. Death to Him was an act. He dismissed His spirit. There were many direct prophecies fulfilled in His death, such as Ps. 22; 69; Isa. 53:5-12, and many others. It has been computed that 25 prophecies were thus fulfilled in the death of Christ. In that way His death was a verification of the Old Testament prophecies.

b) **Christ was buried . . .** (v. 4). The burial certified the fact of His death, and focuses attention on the fact of

His resurrection. Isaiah had prophesied of the manner and circumstances connected with His burial (53 : 9).

c) **“He rose again . . .”** (v. 4). In the preaching of the apostles great emphasis is laid on the resurrection, as also in the epistles. The resurrection is a fact, and not a fiction. It is not a myth, but a miracle. The fact that He would be raised was prophesied in Ps. 2 : 7; 16 : 10; Isa. 53 : 10-11. That it would take place on the third day was foreshadowed in the waving of the sheaf of first fruits (Lev. 23 : 10), and in the experience of Jonah as stated by the Lord (Matt. 12 : 40). The burial and the resurrection are bracketed together by the phrase “according to the Scriptures”. In this connection it is well to remember the triple sign given to the disciples on the resurrection morning, that is, the open sepulchre with the soldiers fled, the seal broken, and the stone rolled away; the empty tomb and the grave clothes still lying in their folds (John 19 : 1-9). Thus the redemptive work of Christ and the revealed Word of God are inextricably interwoven in the message of the gospel.

**The evidential facts and witnesses (vs 5-11).**

d) **“He was seen of Cephas . . .”** (vs 5-8), or rather “He appeared to Cephas . . .” (cf. Luke 24 : 34). The post-resurrection appearances of the Lord are important as they substantiate the truth of the resurrection. The credibility of their witness is therefore vital. His appearances were many and covered a protracted period of time, some 40 days. The witnesses were many and varied. None of them had anticipated the resurrection. On the contrary they had discredited such a possibility, and did not believe the news until they received concrete evidence of its truthfulness. All but one had known Him intimately for over three years, and one had known Him all through



His boyhood years — James. One — Paul — had been His avowed enemy. Having known Him intimately, the apostles looked at Him, carefully examined His features when they saw Him, and they handled Him and listened to His voice (1 John 1:1). He not only appeared to individuals, but to the twelve as a group, and later to all the apostles together, as well as to 500 brethren at once. When that took place is not recorded. The majority of the 500 were still alive when the epistle was written. As the witness of women was not accepted as evidence in court, the witness of the women recorded in the gospels is not called for. This is in keeping with the teaching of the epistle and the New Testament with regard to the place allotted to women in public ministry. The apostle leaves no loophole to question the credibility of the witnesses, and he emphasizes the unanimity of their testimony (cf. Matt. 26:51; Mk. 14:59). Moreover, at these appearances He continued talking to them concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). The reference to the twelve and then to all the apostles makes it evident that Paul recognized Matthias as one of them. The reference to James is of special value, because up until the crucifixion none of the family had believed Him to be the Messiah. James, and also Jude, were therefore converted after the resurrection.

**Paul's own witness** (vs 8-11). The apostle dwells at some length on his own witness for some very evident reasons. He was not one of the twelve. He had not accompanied with the Lord, and had not been present at any of the post-resurrection appearances. However, he parallels his own experience with theirs as being equally objective in character and of equal value. He speaks of himself as one "born out of due time" as an "untimely birth" (Job 3:16 LXX), as an abortion (J.N.D.). Why did

he use such a disparaging designation? Was it that some of his detractors who questioned his apostleship drew that invidious comparison between him and the other twelve? And did his sense of shame for having persecuted the Church of God constrain him to accept the derogatory comparison? Possibly, but undoubtedly his conversion and its manner is a pattern of the way the nation will be converted in a coming day (Zech. 12 : 9-14). However, the sense of his unworthiness was overwhelming and grew as the years passed. He considered himself to be the least of all the apostles. Years later he speaks of himself as "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3 : 8). Then in his sunset years, in writing to his son in the faith — Timothy, he takes his place as the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1 : 12-15). Hence he delights to magnify the grace of God, both in relation to his conversion and his call to service. That grace, he says, was not vain, or fruitless, in his case. He could truthfully say that he had laboured more abundantly than they all put together, or any of them, a tremendous claim. He had laboured in Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia, and at the time of writing was labouring in Ephesus, the capital of that part of Asia. He acknowledges that this was due to the grace of God with him. There was no claim to any personal merit. Compare the words "Yet not I" with Rom. 7 : 20 and Gal. 2 : 20. In concluding his brief, crystallized testimony, he asserts that whatever the difference in their experience and service, their message was the same. It was **the** apostolic message. It is the only gospel. He had evidently gained the knowledge of the Lord's post-resurrection appearances through Peter and James during the fifteen days he spent with Peter in Jerusalem (Gal. 1 : 18; 2 : 9).

Note how the same confession "I am not worthy" was

made by Jacob, John, the Centurion, and the Prodigal (Gen. 32 : 10; John 1 : 27; Luke 7 : 7; 15 : 19).

## 6. The Christian Assembly and the final victory (10 : 12-58)

### A. The Resurrection of Christ (vs 12-19)

**“Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead . . .”** (12-19). The Sadducees denied the resurrection (Acts 23 : 8), and some in Athens had mocked at the teaching (Acts 17 : 32). Possibly the error crept into the assembly through such contacts. The solemn implication of such a doctrine is enlarged upon. As the resurrection from the dead is inseparably linked with the resurrection of Christ, to deny the one is also to deny the other. If Christ be not risen, then both preaching and faith are alike fruitless (v. 14), the witness of the apostle is false, a mere superstitious belief, an old wives’ fable (v. 17). It is all a delusion, leaving the believer still in his sins, and in his guilt, for the resurrection of Christ and our justification stand or fall together, and the dead in Christ have perished without any hope (v. 18). If in this life only there is hope in Christ, and nothing beyond the grave, then of all people the plight of the Christian is the most pitiable. He is living in a false Utopia, suffering from a happy hallucination, like many that are in mental homes, a psychotic.

### B. The Resurrection of the Dead (vs 20-49)

**“But now is Christ risen . . .”** (20-22a). In his authoritative statement of the gospel the apostle had laid emphasis on the resurrection of Christ by citing the witnesses. Based upon its certainty, he stresses its consequences. These are both universal and eternal. The words “Christ is risen” (v. 20) affirm that He not only rose from the dead

on the third day, but that He continues as the 'Risen Lord'. His resurrection bears the stamp of permanence. As such He is the firstfruits of them that slept. That is, it is the pledge and proof, and pattern of the resurrection of the redeemed. The term "firstfruits" refers to the waving of the sheaf or handful of firstfruits of the harvest before the Lord on the "morrow after the Sabbath" — that is, the first day of the week (Lev. 23 : 10).

In verses 21-22 the true humanity of our Lord is stressed by the repeated use of the words "by man". This comparison between Adam and Christ is more fully developed in Rom. 5 : 12-21. As Adam's one transgression resulted in the sentence of death being passed on all men alike, so the "resurrection of the dead" in this verse must apply to all alike. If the Greek preposition "en" is understood as positional, then all mankind is viewed as "in Adam" and the words "in Christ" would refer to all who are linked with Him in death and resurrection (Rom. 6 : 6-7; 7 : 4; Eph. 1 : 1-4). For them resurrection unto life is assured. However, if the preposition "en" is taken as instrumental (as in Luke 22 : 49), then the verse should be an expansion of v. 21, and equally universal. The position of the word "all" would seem to favour this view, for it is not said that all in Adam die, or that all in Christ shall be made alive, but "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." However, the words "but every man in his own order" clearly and definitely guard against universalism, the false doctrine that all will eventually be saved, or raised to life eternal. The word "order" is one of many army terms used in the chapter and denotes a corps, a detachment or a company. The statement is a confirmation of other scriptures that there is to be no general resurrection of the dead (John 5 : 28-29; Acts 4 : 2). Christ is the firstfruits. He stands alone. His resurrection

is unique. "They that are Christ's" form the second group or corps. It is a very embracing term. It allows of no division or faction. All who belong to Christ by virtue of redemption will be made alive at His coming. Saints of both the Old and New Testament days come within its scope (Heb. 11:40). The coming referred to relates to His coming for His own (John 14:3), but it implies the course of the period between the rapture and the revelation. Thereby the saints who will be martyred in the days of the tribulation will form part of this company (Rev. 20:4) designated as the first resurrection. His coming is more fully developed in vs 52-56 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

**"Then cometh the end . . ."** (v. 24). "The word translated 'then' (eita) is not then immediately, but then after an interval, e.g. Mark 4:17, 28 and 1 Cor. 15:5, 7. The interval implied is the kingdom referred to in vs 24-28." (W. E. Vine). The end refers to the final event, the resurrection of the rest of the dead (Rev. 20:5).

When Christ returns, the kingdom, the subject of so much prophecy in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 32:1; Ps. 22:27-28) will be inaugurated. The word "must" should be noted. It is used in connection with His death (John 3:14); His resurrection (John 20:9); and His exaltation (Acts 3:21). In God's great prophetic programme each of these is a must. "He must reign." All His enemies will be completely subdued. These will include all the evil Satanic powers, as well as evil men, such as the beast and the false prophet, the Anti-Christ, the man of sin, and son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:8; Isa. 11:4). The last enemy, death, will be made to yield up its prey (Rev. 20:5, 12), and in the new creation there will be no more death (Rev. 21:4). This kingdom,



the mediatorial kingdom of the Son of Man, will, according to Rev. 20, last for 1,000 years. The words "all rule, all authority and power" (v. 24) denote a universal and absolute authority. The words of Ps. 8:6 are quoted to confirm this. When the kingdom is delivered up to God, and the eternal age, or the dispensation of the fulness of times, is ushered in, even "then also" the Son will be subject to the Father, even as when on earth. This is the farthest point on the far horizon that is viewed through the telescope of prophecy. The verse makes it clear that the Theanthropic (Godhood and manhood, or the Son in manhood) character assumed by our Lord at His incarnation will be eternal in its duration.

**"Else what shall they do . . ."** (29-34). After the very important parenthetical passage (vs 20-28) the apostle reverts to the problem of the resurrection. The parenthetical passage covers the whole of human history from the fall of man (v. 21) to the eternal state, when God shall be all in all (v. 28).

**Baptism for the dead** (v. 29). This is a difficult verse, and a satisfactory explanation may not be possible. Nevertheless three suggestions may be made:—

a) It may refer to a practice of baptizing persons on behalf of someone who had died unbaptized. There is no evidence that such a practice was observed then, though some heretic might have done so, and certainly no scripture warrant for it can be found. It is to be noted that Paul does not say anything which can be interpreted as commending such a practice. But if there was to be no resurrection, then there would be no reason for it. It is possible that the apostle is meeting the heretics on their own ground. They denied the resurrection; yet they

practised a rite which would be meaningless if their contention was true.

b) It is thought by some to be a military expression, suggesting that those newly baptized were at their baptism taking the place of believers who had died in the conflict, as it were. What would be the good of replacing soldiers in a battle, the only outcome of which is death and defeat?

c) It may refer to the symbolic meaning of baptism. Baptism portrays death, burial and resurrection with Christ (Rom. 6 : 1-7). But if there is no resurrection, then baptism loses some of its significance. In such a case it could only symbolize death and burial. What shall they do who are baptized as dead persons if there is no resurrection? While grammatically the first is acceptable, doctrinally the last is preferable.

**"I die daily . . ."** (v. 31). Paul walked the streets of Ephesus with the daily possibility of becoming the victim of the assassin's knife. His life was hourly in jeopardy. To what purpose was all this if there was to be no resurrection? There is no record in the Acts of anything like what is described in v. 32 as fighting with beasts, but it may have an echo in 2 Cor. 1 : 10. When I visited Ephesus in 1952, I was shown what is called Paul's prison. It is situated some little distance to the west of the ruins of Ephesus on a little hill. At Izmir I visited some archaeologists who were at work on some excavated pottery, and was told that there is a tradition there that Paul was imprisoned in that prison among wild beasts. Is this the "so great a death" from which he was delivered? In any case it is clear that Paul here is not speaking metaphorically, that is, with regard to reckoning himself to

have died to sin. The reference to the wild beasts, however, may be figurative.

**“Be not deceived . . .”** (v. 33-34). Do not deceive yourselves. Wrong doctrine as to the resurrection would corrupt them morally. It would inevitably lead to a materialistic concept of life. Hence in v. 34 he speaks “to their shame” (cf. 4 : 14, 6.5), and solemnly warns them of this danger. As with the certain sound of a trumpet (14 : 8) he calls upon them to awake. It was a sad day for Samson when he was asleep with his head in the lap of Delilah (Judges 15 : 19-20). When he woke he “wist not that the Lord had departed from him.” It was a sad day when Jonah had to be awakened by the mariners who had no knowledge of God. It was a sad day for the foolish virgins as they had no time to go and buy oil. Compare Rom. 13 : 11, 1 Cor. 15 : 34, Eph. 5 : 14. These give three reasons for the need to awake. The coming of the Lord, concern for those have not the knowledge of God, and the danger of conformity to the world. Those who denied the resurrection betrayed their ignorance of God and of His power. This was to their shame (Matt. 22 : 29). Hence we see the vital relationship between doctrine and practice, or as stated in the epistle to Titus, between sound doctrine and godliness.

In the section thus far reviewed the apostle condemns the leaven of the Sadducees, or modernism; the leaven of the Pharisees and the claim to some priority at the rapture (v. 23), and lastly the leaven of Herod-materialism (v. 32).

**“How will the dead be raised?”** (35-49). The nature of the resurrection body and the analogy from nature (35-44). The sceptic thinks that his question and problem, “with what body will they be raised?”, are unanswerable. He

intended to ridicule and pour scorn on the teaching regarding the resurrection of the dead. Paul immediately brands such reasoning as foolishness, and the one who brings forward that objection as a fool. He appeals to nature for an analogy, and bids them consider the wonderful process of death and resurrection in the sowing of seed. After death it is quickened and given a body (vs 36-38; cf. John 12:24). This was something they were familiar with, but as to the significance of which they were blind. From the vegetable kingdom he proceeds to the animal kingdom, and then to the celestial.

**"That which thou sowest . . ."** (36-37). Here the reference is to **the vegetable kingdom**. Three things are said concerning this :—

1) It is only after death that God quickens it or gives it a new life;

2) The body that is sown is but bare grain, and goes into dissolution. It is not the same body that is seen after the quickening; nevertheless the two are identical, though different;

3) God in the exercise of His own sovereign powers gives to each seed its own body. The comparison between this and the resurrection of the dead is drawn in verses 42-44.

**"All flesh . . ."** He proceeds to consider **the animal kingdom** (v. 39). There is an essential difference between the four kinds of flesh mentioned. This incidentally gives the lie to evolution. It is a false philosophy. Whereas God has made of one blood all nations, so that it is not possible to differentiate between the blood of men of different races, that of the beasts, fish and birds is of another kind. Each has been given a type of flesh suit-

able to its own requirements in its own peculiar realm in this creation. In the same way God will give the believer a body suitable to His kingdom at the resurrection.

**“There are celestial . . .” (40-41). The celestial kingdom.** The terrestrial and the celestial are contrasted in view of the fact that each partakes of a peculiar type of glory. The difference between the glory of the one and the glory of the other is not one of degree, but of kind. The same difference pertains to the stars. The glory of one is different in kind to that of another.

**“So also is the resurrection . . .” (42-44).** The burial of the body of the believer is compared to sowing a seed. Four times we read, “It is sown”. Three graphic descriptions of the death-state of the body are given. It is sown in corruption, in dishonour, and in weakness. Moreover, it is sown a natural body, that is, a body fitted for our present earthly existence. All these are in marked contrast to that which shall be. The resurrected body will be incorruptible, it will be raised in glory and in power, a spiritual body fitted for the celestial and spiritual realm. All this is an amplification of the words “thou sowest not that body that shall be” (v. 37). This is a wonderful fact.

**“And so it is written . . .” (45-49).** Here the apostle draws an analogy from the Scripture. From the arguments based on God’s sovereign ways in creation the apostle goes on to draw an analogy from the contrast between Adam and Christ.

Adam is the **first** man, so there was no pre-Adamic race. Christ is the **second** man, but the **last** Adam. There is going to be a **third** man — the man of sin, but in the mercy of God he will not be the head of a race. As the **last** Adam, Christ is the head of the new creation.



The contrasts should be noted :—

- (1) Adam was created. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and until then he had no existence. It was thus that he came into being;
- (2) At his creation he became a living soul;
- (3) He was of the earth, earthy, made of dust, and destined to return to dust after he sinned;
- (4) Having become a living soul, and his body made of the earth, he is spoken of as “natural”.

On the other hand Christ is :—

- (1) From heaven, and not of the earth, earthy. He was eternally pre-existent. His birth was not the beginning of His existence. He was from everlasting;
- (2) In manhood a quickening spirit. “As the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will” (John 5 : 21; 6 : 33, 39, etc.);
- (3) Spoken of, as concerning His body, “a body hast thou prepared me” (Heb. 10 : 5). It was in “the **likeness** of sinful flesh”, but it was free from the law of sin in its members, hence His body saw no corruption;
- (4) Spoken of as spiritual in contrast to natural. This refers to His resurrection state.

All mankind partakes of these characteristics of Adam. We bear his image. Similarly those who belong to Christ are destined in the purpose of God to bear His image. The order of history is clear. Firstly, the natural at creation; secondly, the spiritual. It is Christ in resurrection who ushers in the new creation.

**C. The transformation of the living, and when will the dead be raised ? (15 : 50-58).**

**“Now this I say . . .”** (v. 50). He acknowledges that neither the living nor the dead can inherit the kingdom of God. Here the “kingdom of God” is to be interpreted as referring to the final state of glory mentioned in vs 24 and 28. “Flesh and blood” refers to the living, “corruption” to the dead. Our present bodies, suited as they are to our existence on earth, are not suited to an existence in the heavenly sphere. This problem he does not seek to solve by any analogy, either from nature or from Scripture, but by making known a mystery, that is, a truth hitherto unrevealed (cf. 1 Thess. 4 : 15, “the word of the Lord”). This is in contrast with the instruction regarding the Supper (11 : 23) and the gospel (15 : 1), which he says he had delivered to them (cf. other mysteries, especially Rom. 11 : 25, Israel’s blindness, and Eph. 3 : 3-9, the Church as the body of Christ).

**All would not sleep.** (v. 51). That is, all would not die. Sleep is the normal way in which he speaks of the death of the Christian. From Dan. 12 : 1-2 it is evident that the term applies to the body and not to the soul. The theory of the soul sleeping is not a scriptural one. The believer at death goes to be with Christ, which is far better (Phil. 1 : 21-23).

**All would be changed.** (v. 51). This includes the living and the dead, although in v. 52 the word “changed” is used more specifically with regard to the living. The epochal event which will bring about this change is the coming of the Lord (Rom. 8 : 23; 1 Thess. 4 : 13-16). The “last trump” is the same as that mentioned in 1 Thess. 4 : 16 as “the trump of God”. It is therefore not to be confused with the trumpets of Revelation 8 : 6 or of

Matt. 24 : 31, which are to be sounded by angels.

**"The dead shall be raised . . ."** (v. 52). In v. 23, these are limited to "they that are Christ's". In 1 Thess. 4 : 16 it is "the dead in Christ". Then the living will be changed, that is, living believers. This event and this order are foreshadowed in the words of our Lord to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11 : 25-26). To the one company He will be "the resurrection" and to the other "the life". The words "He that believeth in Me . . . though he die, yet shall he live" and "whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" anticipate the revelation given through Paul. But John's gospel was written much later than this epistle. Paul's revelation corroborates the word spoken by the Lord. The words "he that believeth in Me" make it clear beyond doubt that a genuine faith in Christ is the only qualification for part in the rapture.

**"In a moment . . ."** (v. 52). It will be the briefest possible space of time, a moment, or an 'atom' of time. It will be but the twinkling of the eyelid. This change will not only be in a moment, but at the same moment for all concerned, at the last trump (cf. Num. 10 : 5-6). This clearly negatives the "partial rapture" theory, which states that some Christians will take precedence over others at the rapture, claiming some higher attainment. It will be the fulfilment of a prophetic scripture (Isa. 25 : 8; Hos. 13 : 14). "O death, where is the victory?" This may be the triumphant shout of the raised, whereas "O death, where is thy sting?" may be that of the changed (v. 55). And both would join in the shout, "Death is swallowed up in victory". The corruptible and the mortal represent the same two companies, the dead and the living. Nothing is said as to the dead being those of

a special period of history; therefore we conclude that saints such as those mentioned in Heb. 11 are included. They and we shall be made perfect together (Heb. 11 : 40).

Death is a malicious and malignant foe, like some vicious snake. Its painful sting is sin. It is because of its poisoned fangs that the cobra is dreaded, and were it not for sin, death would hold no terror. For the believer the sting has been removed, and that which gives it strength, the law, has been fully satisfied in the death of Christ. In His death its penalty has been exacted (Rom. 10 : 4) and its curse removed (Gal. 3 : 13). Therefore the believer exults in the gift of victory over both sin and death, through our Lord Jesus Christ. The full title acknowledges His glory (v. 57). Note the last witness to have seen the risen Lord (v. 8); the last enemy (v. 26); the last Adam (v. 45); the last trump (v. 52).

**“Therefore, my . . .”** (v. 58). “Therefore, my beloved brethren”, a term of endearment. He urges them to stability of heart, an absence of fickleness, and to active service for the Lord, knowing that in view of the future glory their labour would not be fruitless (cf. v. 14). It would produce fruit now, and bring its reward later.

## **7. The Christian Assembly and its responsibility** (16 : 1-21).

### **A. To the poor among the saints (1-4).**

(cf. “The Lord’s Offering” — Exod. 35 : 21-24).

The collection for the saints referred to is the same as that mentioned in Rom. 15 : 26; 2 Cor. 8 : 1; 9 : 1; Acts 24 : 17. It was for the poor at Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 2 : 10). While the apostle thus collected for the poor, there is

no record that he over-paraded his needs or collected for preachers and gospel work. The reference to "every first day of the week" is significant evidence that Christians observed that day, or met together on that day (cf. Acts 20 : 7; Rev. 1 : 10; John 20 : 19, 26). It was distinct from the Jewish Sabbath, and is never termed Sabbath. It commemorated the resurrection of Christ, and the day of Pentecost. The guiding principle in their giving was to be the measure of their prosperity (cf. Deut. 16 : 10-17). For such material ministry as the disposing of funds the assembly should choose men whom they have proved faithful. There have been in many countries sad cases of the misuse and misappropriation of such funds. Therefore care should be taken. The apostle would not accept the responsibility alone (cf. Acts 6 : 1-6; 2 Cor. 8 : 20-21). But if it was necessary for him to go, they would accompany him.

#### **B. To those addicted to the ministry (5-21).**

The whole of this chapter seems like a postscript to the letter. It is also an introduction to the second epistle.

- (a) Paul and his journeys (5-9). In this the assembly had a responsibility, and the servant's plans must ever be "if the Lord permit" and in the light of open doors (5-9).
- (b) **Timothy** (10-11). They were not to despise him. This is possibly a reference to his youth. He was to be with them without fear. Paul's commendation of him is a high one (10-11).
- (c) **Apollos** (v. 12). The assembly had evidently enquired of Paul regarding him. As seemingly his name was



being bandied about as a party leader, he declined to go, but would consider going later. He would not lend the weight of his presence to any party. There was no self-seeking. Paul's words show that he had complete confidence in Apollos, and that he treated him as a fellow-worker, and not as one under him.

- (d) Stephanas (13-16). The saints were to submit themselves to such and to all who thus laboured.
- (e) Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (17-18). These had a **refreshing** ministry, like the dew and the rain. The assembly should acknowledge them.
- (f) Aquila and Priscilla (v. 19). A faithful couple. They were at Corinth during the apostle's first visit, and have an enviable place in the record of the New Testament (Acts 18 : 2, 20; Rom. 16 : 3; 2 Tim. 4 : 19). The assembly at Ephesus, from where Paul wrote the letter, met in their home. It was in this way that the problem of meeting places was solved in apostolic days. The practice has very definite advantages. It would avoid centralization and the spending of large amounts on expensive and ornate buildings.

## 8. **Conclusion** (16 : 22-24).

Before putting down his pen Paul gives a most solemn warning. The acid test of Christian experience is a true and genuine love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone devoid of that would be anathema — accursed. Maranatha is also an untranslated word. It had evidently become a part of the vocabulary of the early Christians. It signifies "The Lord cometh", or "O Lord, come." It is the last reference to the coming of the Lord in the epistle. From the commencement and in connection with every subject discussed the apostle had brought the subject to

the attention of the assembly. It would be safe to say that it occupies a place of central importance in the epistle. To the unbelieving it is an event to be dreaded, a day of remorse. To be accursed at His coming will mean banishment to the lake of fire.

He concludes with a prayer for grace upon the Corinthian believers, and an affirmation of his love for them **all**. This thread also runs through the whole epistle.

# **Second Epistle to the Corinthians**

# The Second Epistle

## Introduction

The epistle was written by Paul from Macedonia (1 : 16, 2 : 13; 7 : 5), possibly from Philippi, and probably within one year of the first. Timothy had been sent to Corinth before the first epistle was written (1 Cor. 4 : 17). But it would seem that possibly the letter would reach there before him (1 Cor. 16 : 10 — “When Timothy comes”). The apostle’s second visit to Corinth (Acts 20 : 1-3) was between the writing of the two letters. This is what may be inferred from a comparison of 2 Cor. 13 : 1 and 2 Cor. 2 : 1. It is difficult, however, to speak with certainty regarding Paul’s journeys at that time. Acts does not give a complete or full record of all his journeys. This is evident from a perusal of 2 Cor. 11 : 23-26.

In the second epistle the apostle refers to a letter which he had sent by Titus, and that had caused him grief. At one time he repented of having written it (7 : 8). This can hardly be what we know as the first epistle. During his second visit, evidently, some had caused him great heaviness and great pain. They had questioned his apostleship and his motives, and had sought to undermine his ministry. Among his traducers there seems to have been one special individual, who as the result of the letter sent by the hand of Titus was severely reprimanded and disciplined by the “many”, and this had been effectual in his restoration and the acknowledgment of his wrong against the apostle (2 Cor. 2 : 5-10). The apostle was also charged with weakness and fickleness because

he had not fulfilled his promise to visit them again. These charges he answers.

We consider that altogether four epistles were addressed to the Christians at Corinth by the apostle. The first is referred to in 1 Cor. 5 : 9. The second is what we know as the first epistle. Then he wrote the stern letter (2 Cor. 2 : 9; 7 : 8) sent by Titus, and lastly what we know as the second epistle. This epistle is complementary to the first. It considers the servant of God in relation to the assembly. As in the book of Numbers we have the camp and the Levites, so in these two epistles instruction is given regarding the church and its order, and the minister and his ministry. He is spoken of as the minister of the new covenant (3 : 6), minister of God (6 : 4), and of Christ (11 : 23). It summarizes that which condemns or commends a man as a servant. The word "commend" appears seven times in the letter (3 : 1; 4 : 2; 5 : 12; 10 : 12, 18; 12 : 11) and the word "commendation" twice (3 : 1), and the word "approved" twice (6 : 4; 7 : 11). This is one of the key words of the epistle. By reversing the order of the words there is a change of emphasis which is instructive. In 5 : 12 and 10 : 12, 18 reference is made to those who "themselves commend", and in 3 : 1 the apostle asks, "Do we begin to ourselves commend?" In these it is self-commendation that is in view. Such behaviour is reprehensible. It was the mark of the false servant. On the contrary the apostle "commended himself" by his behaviour (4 : 2), "commending ourselves . . ." "that the ministry be not blamed" (4 : 2; 6 : 4). It is such as the Lord commends that are approved (10 : 18). Other key phrases may be noted.

"In the sight of God". The verses in which this expression is found show that the apostle's private life



(4 : 2), preaching (2 : 17), pastoral care (2 : 10; 7 : 12; 12 : 19) and pecuniary matters, that is, providing for honest things (8 : 21), were all transparent. He walked as before the Lord.

**“Not according to the flesh”.** His purpose and plans (1 : 17), his estimate of men and of the Lord (5 : 16), and his weapons of warfare (10 : 3), were not carnal in their origin and character.

His reference to **“ourselves”**. “We should not trust in ourselves” (1 : 9). “We are not sufficient of ourselves” (3 : 5). “We do not preach ourselves” (4 : 5), “We do not stretch ourselves beyond measure” (10 : 13). But “we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience . . .” (4 : 2).

All these together set a very high standard for the servant of God. Hence it is not surprising that throughout the epistle there are many references to the Lord Jesus in His path of service. The Lord is the pattern servant. The words of Isaiah, “Behold my servant,” might well be adopted as a title for these references (Isa. 42 : 1). The epistle begins with a reference to the **“God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Then we read of the “Sufferings of Christ” — the suffering servant (1 : 5); the “sweet savour of Christ” — His fragrant life and service (2 : 15); the “dying of Jesus” — setting His face as a flint — (4 : 10); “the life of Jesus” — His life of dependence and devotion (4 : 10); the “love of Christ” (5 : 14); “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” (8 : 9); “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (10 : 1); “the obedience of Christ” (10 : 5); and the “power of Christ” (12 : 9).

The letter is the most personal of all Paul’s epistles. It is almost an autobiography. In parts it throbs with emotion and pulsates with strong feeling. The epistle contains

many digressions which are pursued at some length, as, for example, the meeting with Titus. This he mentions in 2 : 13, but he deals fully with it only in 7 : 5-16. Hence the epistle is not an easy one to analyze, but there are three main sections :—

1. **The servant and his service** (chs 1-7). **His motives, methods and ministry;**
2. **The servant and the saints** (chs 8-9). **The offering for the poor;**
3. **The servant and Satan's counterfeits — The false apostles** (chs 10-13).

The following fuller analysis may also be suggested :—

1. **Salutation** (1 : 1-2). **The minister and the manner of his appointment.** Paul's authority.
2. **The minister and his motives** (1 : 3-2 : 17). **Paul's integrity.**
  - A. The conflict in Asia (1 : 3-11);
  - B. His conduct in the past (1 : 12-22);
  - C. His care for them (1 : 23-2 : 17).
3. **The minister and his ministry of salvation** (3 : 1-7 : 16). **Paul's ministry.**
  - A. Exposition (3 : 1-6 : 10);
  - B. Exhortation (6 : 11-7 : 1);
  - C. Paul's consolation (7 : 2-16).
4. **The minister and the "ministering to the saints"** (8 : 1-9-15). **Paul and his charity.**
  - A. The grace of God on the churches of Macedonia (8 : 1-5);
  - B. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (8 : 6-15);

- C. The grace of God in the hearts of Titus and others (8 : 16-9 : 5);
  - D. The grace of God in the Corinthian believers (9 : 6-15).
5. **The minister and the ministers of Satan (chs 10-13). Paul and his glory.**
- A. Paul's apology in view of the charges made against him (10 : 1-18);
  - B. Paul's anxiety in view of the false apostles (11 : 1-33);
  - C. Paul's apostleship and his credentials (12 : 1-19);
  - D. Paul's apprehension and final warning (12 : 20-13 : 10).
6. **Concluding admonition and benediction (13 : 11-14). Paul and the Trinity.**

# Commentary

## 1. Salutation (ch. 1 : 1-2)

**Paul's apostleship** (see 1 Cor. 1 : 1). Here the emphasis is on the will of God. Timothy — he had been sent to Corinth before the first letter was sent (1 Cor. 4 : 17) and the apostle had some fears as to how he would be received (1 Cor. 16 : 10-11). On his return to Ephesus the news he brought was evidently not very reassuring.

“**In all Achaia . . .**” (v. 1). The gospel had penetrated all of Achaia — there was an assembly at Cenchrea (Rom. 16 : 1). The epistle was not just a private letter to the assembly at Corinth.

“**Grace and peace . . .**” (v. 2). See note on 1 Cor. 1 : 3.

## 2. The minister and his motives (1 : 3-2 : 17).

**Paul's integrity.**

In the first epistle the apostle had intimated his desire and tentative plans to spend the winter with them (16 : 5-7). The fact that he did not do so led to charges of fickleness and insincerity being made against him by his traducers. This charge he answers somewhat at length.

**A. The conflict in Asia** (1 : 3-11). This is the first of five sections dealing with affliction in the epistle (see also 4 : 8-18; 6 : 4-10; 11 : 23-33; 12 : 7-10). These are not recorded in the Acts. Whatever the nature of the suffering referred to in these verses, it was unexpected and very severe in character. Death seemed certain and inevitable.

The words "so great a death" give it a peculiar and poignant character. He describes the deliverance as a "gift bestowed upon them" through the prayers of believers (cf. Acts 12:11). On that special occasion of suffering he was like a beast of burden crushed by a load it cannot carry. The tumult of Acts 19 seems insufficient for what is here described. Affliction and suffering, and comfort or encouragement, are closely interwoven in the opening verses. The suffering was a partaking in the sufferings of Christ (v. 5). Therein he experienced the strengthening comfort of God through Christ (v. 5). The way he was enabled to endure it was an example and an encouragement to others (v. 6). Through the affliction he came to know God as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort (v. 3), and as the God of resurrection (v. 9). Thereby his own ministry was enriched (v. 4), for he was able to minister comfort to others. His suffering gave a burden and an incentive to others to pray (v. 11). And the sustaining and delivering grace of God led to thanksgiving. Hence the section begins and ends with this note of praise to "the God and Father . . ." (vs 3, 7; cf. Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:31). The Lord Jesus is the Son of the Father from eternity. At His incarnation He became a servant (Phil. 2:5-7).

**B. His conduct in the past (vs 12-22).** "In simplicity . . . sincerity". He boasted in the testimony of his conscience as to his conduct when in their midst. It was "in simplicity". There was no duplicity about him. He did not say one thing and mean another. If the word should be "holiness" it corresponds with what he says in 1 Thess. 2:10 as to how "holily" he had behaved at Thessalonica. It was in "sincerity", and his preaching was the same (2:17). It was without a stain or crack when examined in the sunlight (cf. 1 Cor. 5:8). It was not in fleshly



wisdom. He did not descend to cunning or shrewd ways, or to the use of flattery as a cloke for covetousness. He had not been guided by any motives of self-interest. On the contrary he had been energized by the grace of God.

**“we write . . .”** (vs 13-14). He did not write in such a way that they were to read between the lines, as is so common. He did not wish to convey anything other than what he actually had written to them. Or it may mean that he had only written letters to be read openly in the assembly. There were things which they acknowledged as facts, and he hoped they would continue to do so to the end and in a more complete way. Then in the “day of the Lord Jesus” at the judgment seat the glorying would be mutual (see note on 1 Cor. 1 : 8).

**“In this confidence . . .”** (15-16). In this confidence as to their attitude (cf. 2 : 3; 7 : 16) that they recognized his sincerity, he had purposed visiting them. He was not insincere when he planned such a visit. He desired their spiritual blessing only. The words “second benefit” are not to be understood as referring to some undefined second blessing. According to his plan he would visit them twice — on his day to and from Macedonia. Thus they would have a double pleasure, not only of two visits, but of receiving his ministry and also of helping him on his way to Judea.

**“Did I use lightness?”** (17-20). The apostle resolutely asserts that in planning such a double visit he had done so with proper consideration; he had not acted in any fickle or self-interested way. He was not vacillating when he so purposed. He was not given to saying “yes” one minute and “no” the other. As God is faithful and true to His promises, therefore as His servant he had fully expected to fulfil what he had purposed. God is the “God

of truth", the "God of the Amen" (Isa. 65 : 16). The Old Testament promises fall into two categories. There are promises made to Him as the Son, such as Psalm 2 : 8, and there are promises to be fulfilled in Him and through Him. God fulfilled these promises in the incarnation and the resurrection. These promises were dependent for their fulfilment on the obedience of the Son, seen in His "Lo I come . . .". His "yea" was an unqualified yea to all the promises and purposes of God. Through Him they are Amen to the glory of God, by us and our acceptance of the gospel and appropriation of the promises. A preacher, or the preachers, of such a message concerning such promises could not be merely "yes" and "no" men. They should not vacillate.

"Now the . . ." (21-22). The apostle makes it clear that "all things are of God", that "salvation is of the Lord". In these two verses he describes or mentions four important facets of the Christian's experience :—

1) He is established or confirmed "in Christ", "in the faith" (Col. 2 : 7) and "in grace" (Heb. 13 : 9). It is God who thus put our feet on the rock. Samuel was "established to be a prophet of the Lord", and so was Paul (1 Sam. 3 : 20). This confirmation is a continuous process in contrast to the following three.

2) He was anointed. Like Aaron and his family he was consecrated to a priestly ministry. From 1 John 2 : 27 we understand that the Holy Spirit Himself is the anointing.

3) He was sealed (cf. Eph. 1 : 13; 4 : 20). The seal is the Holy Spirit; it signifies (1) possession by God through redemption; (2) security (Dan. 6 and Matt. 27), validity of document; (3) genuineness of the article sold.

4) The earnest (cf. 5:5; Eph. 1:14). The gift of the Spirit is what we have received in advance of the inheritance. It is a down payment given in advance. It was used of an engagement ring. The future is therefore certain.

### C. His care for them (1:23-2:17).

**“Moreover I call . . .”** (23-24). In the first epistle (4:19) reference is made to the speech of them that were “puffed up”, evidently against the apostle, charging him with carnal motives. They said he was either fickle or afraid. Paul did not wish to visit them with “a rod”, that is, for severe disciplinary action; therefore he decided not to go, thereby sparing them this experience. He calls God as a witness to the truth of this statement. See similar words in connection with his prayer life (Rom. 1:9); his private life and motives (2 Cor. 1:23); his pastoral care (Phil. 1:8), his public life (1 Thess. 2:5); and his persecutions and the record of them (2 Cor. 11:31).

He assures them that he does not wish to exercise dominion over their faith. In matters of faith no man can come between the soul of another and God. No one can compel another to believe. That power is vested in the Holy Spirit alone. Moreover, Paul was confident that they were firm and steadfast in the faith, but the words “by faith ye stand” may refer to their individual responsibility in this matter. He wished to be their fellow-worker promoting their true joy, both collectively and individually, more especially the former. For other examples of the construction “not . . . but” see 2:4, 17; 3:3,5,6,13-18.

**“But I determined . . .”** (2:1-2). A comparison of these verses with 12:14 and 13:1 makes it evident that the apostle had paid a second visit to Corinth, and that this

visit had been a painful one. It was mutually sorrowful. He was grieved, and so were they. As he had expressed his desire to promote their joy, he concluded that this would be impossible in view of the existing circumstances. Hence his reluctance and decision not to go as he had intended. The only one who could give him joy were those who now were giving him sorrow.

**“And I wrote . . .”** (3-4). When he determined not to go he wrote them a letter. Titus was evidently commissioned to deliver this letter. This is clear from 2:13 and 7:5-13. He states that this letter was an evidence of his genuine care for them (7:12), and his love toward them (v.4). Being very human and sensitive he wished to avoid accentuating the grief by another visit. The letter referred to was written “out of much affliction and anguish of heart . . . with many tears”. Afterwards he had even repented that he had written it. What we know as the first epistle can hardly fit this description, even though it contains some solemn warnings. The letter spoken of in these verses is now lost. It was not written in order to wound or grieve them, but because of his deep anxiety for their welfare.

**“But if any . . .”** (5-11). Paul’s readiness to forgive the offender is adduced as another token of his love for them. As to who the offender was we are not told explicitly. Two views are held. Many consider him to be the man guilty of incest who was to be handed over to Satan (1 Cor. ch. 5). It is thought that the disciplinary action had brought about true repentance, and that therefore he should be restored to the warm fellowship of the assembly. It is suggested that they were as guilty in being so slow to restore him as they had been in their laxity in disciplining him. But the punishment said to have been

inflicted by the many in v. 6 does not seem to correspond to the requirements of the judgment passed upon the guilty person in ch. 5 of the first epistle.

The other view is that the offender was not the man guilty of incest, but one who had strongly opposed Paul on the visit mentioned in 2 : 1. This suggestion has many things in its favour. The offence is spoken of in terms which would lead one to believe that it was specially directed against the apostle (v. 5), and it was because of this that Paul sent the stern letter to the assembly by Titus (v. 9). The way the apostle speaks of forgiving the culprit suggests that he was personally involved in the offence committed (v. 10).

**“Overcharge you all . . .”** (v. 5). These words are somewhat difficult. Paul wishes to avoid being too severe. He did not want to charge the whole assembly with the offence, yet v. 9 and ch. 7 : 7-11 would definitely suggest that the assembly had a solemn responsibility and obligation to fulfil. This they had seemingly failed to do at the time of the apostle’s visit. The verse also indicates that the offence was not only against the apostle; it was a serious offence against the assembly also, but they had not sufficiently realized this. Hence the forgiveness of the assembly was necessary.

**“Sufficient to such . . .”** (6-8). What the exact form of the punishment was we are not told. The words “. . . of many” are understood and explained as being the majority. While the words have this meaning in some places, such as in 1 Cor. 10 : 5, it is not easy to explain them in this way in this second epistle (see ch. 4 : 15 and 9 : 2). Possibly there was a minority who upheld his views and disagreed with the punishment meted out. Such lack of unanimity in the assembly is often serious in matters of discipline.



But the apostle considered the punishment sufficient in its magnitude and severity. Hence he urges them to forgive him, and entreated them to reaffirm their love to him, possibly by a public statement. Note the words "forgive", "comfort", "confirm" (cf. Gal. 3:15). The person was evidently truly penitent, as he seemed to have been in danger of becoming the victim of remorse, with possibly serious results.

**"For this end . . ."** (9-11). The aim of the letter sent by Titus seems to have been two-fold. It would test their obedience and love towards the apostle, and ultimately it was intended to bring about the result achieved. If they saw fit to forgive the person's offence against the assembly, the apostle would gladly concur and do so in the presence of Christ, and for their sakes. He would act in this matter on Christ's behalf, as it were. He would ratify their forgiveness.

**"Satan . . ."** (v. 11). This is the Hebrew word for adversary — he is referred to five times in the two epistles (1 Cor. 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7). He tempts to sin, despair and departure, and would buffet God's servants. He is allowed by God to be an instrument of discipline (1 Cor. 5:5; cf. Luke 22:31-32; Job 1:8). Satan gains vantage ground over the assembly if it fails to restore a repentant believer. Satan's devices are revealed in the records of the Scripture. Hence it is only as we know the Scriptures that we will become acquainted with them.

**"Furthermore . . ."** (12-13). In these verses Paul adduces another evidence of his genuine care for them. He was so burdened with regard to the result of the mission of Titus that even though a door was opened to him of the Lord in Troas he left for Macedonia where Titus met him

(7:6). Elsewhere he speaks of the opened door (1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3). The words "of the Lord" confirm Rev. 3:8.

**"Now thanks . . ."** (14-17). The very mention of Titus and Macedonia opens the flood gates of joy in his soul as he recalls the happy occasion to which he reverts later in 7:5. Here he views the mission of Titus and its success in the fuller context of the triumphs of the gospel of Christ. This is evident from the word "always". Corinth was not an exception. He attributes his going to Macedonia as having been led in the train of the conqueror, even though the delay in the return of Titus was an important circumstance in it. The memory of it leads to worship and contemplation of the wonderful character and tremendous consequences of such a ministry. A similar tribute of praise is recorded in 8:16 and 9:15 and 1 Co. 15:57. The "triumph" referred to is Christ's. Paul was a trophy of it. Christ was the conqueror, Paul was a captive, led about, not as exposed to humiliation, however, as was the custom with Roman generals in their processions, but as a sharer in the triumph of the gospel. In his versatility the apostle changes the metaphors rapidly. He is the **captive**, and then immediately he is the celebrant waving the incense as the procession passes; then he is the incense itself, **Christ's fragrance**. The three would refer to 1) his conversion, 2) his commission to preach the gospel, and 3) the conformity to Christ in His absolute devotion to God, which also characterized the apostle. The words "sweet savour of Christ" are suggestive of the burnt-offering and its associated meal-offering (Eph. 5:2). This the apostle claimed to be, irrespective of whether the message was accepted or rejected. To the perishing, to those thus doomed to destruction, it was an odour from death to death, that is, from their spiritually

dead state to their second death. To those who had trusted Christ and were experiencing the saving power of God in their lives, it was a savour from life to life, that is, the life possessed in Christ to the enjoyment of eternal life in its fulness (Rom. 6 : 22). A ministry with such far-reaching results demands a God-given fitness and competency. He was not as "the many", the false apostles referred to again in chapter 11, who made merchandise, and retailed an adulterated message. They were hucksters, out to make profit of the ministry. Peter speaks of the same group as making "merchandise" of Christians (2 Pet. 2 : 3). Care must be taken lest letters regarding missionary work should partake of this character, using the need of others for personal gain. The apostle closes the section, which is an introduction to the next as well, with four important statements concerning his ministry :—

(1) Sincerity — it could be tested in the sunlight. His motives were pure (cf. 1 : 12); (2) By the command of God. He was commissioned of God. He had a clear mandate; (3) It was in the sight of God, as under the eye of God in the presence of God; (4) It was in complete fellowship with Christ, and under His direction.

### **3. The minister and his ministry of salvation**

(chs 3 : 1-7 : 16).

#### **Paul's ministry.**

##### **A. Exposition (3 : 1-6 : 10)**

The word translated "ministry" or "ministration" appears some ten times in the epistle. The apostle speaks of it as "this treasure", in a fragile clay vessel (4 : 7); a "stewardship", a gift committed to him (5 : 18-19), demanding faithfulness on his part; an amnesty or an ulti-

matum to be proclaimed, and himself and his fellow-workers as invested with ambassadorial authority and dignity (5:20). It was a ministry of the Spirit, regeneration (3:6); a ministry of righteousness, justification (3:9); of transformation (3:18); of illumination (4:6); of reconciliation (5:19); of sanctification (4:2); and finally of hope (4:14-5:10).

**“Do we begin . . .”** (3:1-5). In these verses the apostle continues to draw the line of demarcation between himself and “the many” referred to in 2:17. Later, in 4:2, he speaks of their practices as the “hidden things of dishonesty or shame”. These false teachers boasted that they had letters of commendation, possibly and probably forged documents from Jerusalem. Sarcastically the apostle says that they were written with “ink”. In contrast to these he speaks of his own epistle: “Ye are our epistle written **in our hearts.**” These words are evidently an allusion to the ministry of Aaron who bore “the names of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually” (Exod. 28:29), or of Moses in his advocacy for Israel on several occasions. Paul’s labour of love on behalf of the Corinthians was known to all, it was read by all, but not only were they his epistle, they were Christ’s epistle also, ministered by the apostle, and written upon tables of flesh, upon their hearts. Thus the apostle refers to them as epistles in a two-fold way. They were written upon his heart, and God had used him to write the truth of the New Covenant on their hearts, as a fulfilment in their experience of Jeremiah 31:33. This was by the Spirit of God. When Apollos had gone to Corinth, the brethren wrote exhorting that he be received (Acts 18:27). This is an example for us today and is a gesture of love as well as a safeguard. But Paul needed no such letter, nor such letters as carried by the false teachers. He

scorned the need of such letters for himself. He had something better. As to his mission and ministry he had a deep-seated inward confidence towards God through Christ. He was sure of the validity of his commission. Along with this Godward confidence, he had a God-given competence, which he did not consider to be a mere natural ability. It was a gift from God. Hence in view of all this he did not need to indulge in self-commendation (v. 1). This subject is reverted to in ch. 10:18. Paul and these false teachers differed as to their manner of life, their methods, their mandate and their ministry.

**"Who also hath made . . ."** (3:6-11). **The two ministries contrasted.** The false teachers were professedly very zealous of the law of Moses. Therefore the apostle proceeds to show the essential and vital differences between the two ministries, that of the law and that of the gospel, the ministry of the old covenant (v. 14) and that of the new (v. 6). The way the two are compared and contrasted may be listed :—

#### THE MINISTRY OF THE OLD COVENANT

1. A ministry of the letter.
2. A ministry written and engraven in stones.
3. A ministry that killeth, a ministry of death.
4. A ministry ushered in with glory, a comparative and temporary glory. Its temporary character indicative of the temporary character of the law.

#### THE MINISTRY OF THE NEW COVENANT

- A ministry of the Spirit.
- A ministry written on the fleshy tablets of the heart.
- A ministry that gives life. vs. 6-7.
- A ministry ushered in with surpassing glory, a glory that abides or is permanent. vs. 7-8.



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 5. A ministry of condemnation.  | A ministry of righteousness, justification.                     |
| 6. A veiled ministry.   | An unveiled ministry.   |
| a) Face of Moses veiled. v. 13.   | Glory in the face of Jesus Christ unveiled. 4 : 6.              |
| b) Old Testament veiled. Books of Moses and prophecies not understood. v. 14. | Word of God a mirror revealing and reflecting his glory. v. 18. |
| c) Veil on their hearts. vs 14-15.  | Hearts or minds illuminated. 4 : 6.                             |
| d) Veiled sanctuary, no access. Heb 9 : 8.                                    | Liberty of access. v. 17. Heb. 10 : 19.                         |
| 7. A ministry to be annulled or abolished.                                    | A ministry that remaineth or abides permanently.                |

It is often said that there is a difference between the ceremonial and the moral law, and that while the ceremonial law has been fulfilled in Christ, the moral law, or the decalogue, still stands. In the Word of God they are not thus differentiated. But even if this difference be allowed, the apostle leaves us in no doubt in this portion as to which he is referring to. He distinctly refers to the "tables of stones" and to that which was "engraven in stones", which can only refer to the ten commandments (v. 7). The term "letter" and "the letter killeth" apply solely to the law, and not to the words of Scripture. They do not warn against accepting or adhering to a literal interpretation of what the Bible says. This ministry of the "letter" that killeth is illustrated in the 3,000 killed at Sinai, at the inauguration of the Old Covenant, while the ministry of the Spirit, the life-giving ministry, is

illustrated in the 3,000 saved on the day of Pentecost. In v. 7 it is said that the mediator's face reflected the glory of God, and that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold his face. From the record of the event in Exodus 34:30 we would gather that this was due to fear rather than to any physical inability. Nothing is said in 2 Cor. 3 as to the phenomena which accompanied the giving of the law as detailed in Heb. 12:18-21 — "the mount . . . that burned", etc. The apostle limits himself to the glory in the face of Moses in view of the lessons he wished to draw from it, in contrast with the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ (4:6). The new was inaugurated in a glory that exceeded and surpassed that of the old to such an extent that when compared, the the glory of the old cannot be considered to be glory. The glory of the moon is nothing like the glory of the sun.

**"Seeing then . . ."** (3:12-4:6). **The two ministers — Moses and Paul — contrasted.** The apostle's hope is based upon the abiding character of the glory of the New Covenant. It enabled him to speak with boldness and courage. He did not need to veil his face as Moses did. Two reasons are given for Moses thus veiling his face:— (1) Because Israel could not look upon it; (2) So that Israel could not see or realize that it was a vanishing glory, that it was a glory which was to be abolished. The latter is emphasized in v. 13.

**"But their minds . . ."** (14-16). Here the apostle digresses to apply the illustration of the veil on the face of Moses to the nation's present state and their future conversion. Now they are blinded or hardened (cf. Rom. 11:7) so that, when they read the books of Moses, that veil remains on the books and their contents. Then he says it is on their heart. Such is Israel's state now.

That veil is lifted or removed in Christ. It is when they turn to Him as their Lord that the veil will be removed. This he bases on the fact that when Moses went into the presence of the Lord he removed the veil (Exod. 34 : 34). Paul himself is an illustration of the truth, and his experience foreshadows that of the nation (cf. Zech. 12 : 10-14). It is only as we see Christ in the Old Testament that its types and prophecies will be understood (John 5 : 39).

“The Lord . . . that Spirit . . . : (17-18). The phrases “The Lord is that Spirit” and “the Lord — the Spirit” are unique. They emphasize the personality and deity of the Spirit. Three things are predicated of His ministry in the chapter:—in v. 6 He gives **life**; in v. 17 He gives **liberty**, that is, the liberty from bondage to the law, the liberty of sons to address the Father (Rom. 8 : 15; Gal. 4 : 6); and in v. 18 He produces **likeness** to Christ. He transforms us into the image of Christ. For the other occurrences of the word rendered “transform” see Matt. 17 : 2, where it is translated “transfigured”, and Rom. 12 : 2. Daily renewal as in Rom. 12 : 2 and daily communion as in 2 Cor. 3 : 18 are thus the secret of this transformation.

“We all . . .” (v. 18). This verse is like a measure pressed down and running over. It is like a diamond with many facets. “But we all” — this “but” connects the verse with the words “not as Moses” in v. 13, and the word “all” shows that the apostle is not speaking of himself only. “With open face” or “unveiled face”. The contrast may be with the veil on the face of Moses or on the heart of Israel. It may even refer to the unveiled face of the Lord in contrast with the veiled face of Moses (cf. 4 : 6). If the translation “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” is accepted, then the believer views in the Word

of God the image of the Lord, reflected, as it were, in a mirror. And by thus beholding, his life is transformed by the Spirit. If, however, we accept the rendering "reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord", the believer is viewed as a mirror. (An untrue mirror gives a distorted reflection.) This fits in with the words "unveiled face" better, but it is somewhat difficult to see how the individual is thereby transformed. However, it might be in that case that the apostle is contrasting what should be the permanent glory reflected in the Christian with the transient and vanishing glory seen in the face of Moses. The words "from glory to glory" may denote from one degree to another, but they may suggest the transformation from the reflected glory of the old to the permanent glory of the new. The verse is doubtless a combination or synchronization of ideas. The apostle multiplies his metaphors.

**"Therefore seeing . . ."** (4:1-6). Paul describes his manner of life and witness. Because of the character of the ministry entrusted to him he did not faint, lose heart, or lose courage and become a coward, in spite of all the militant forces that opposed him and the gospel wherever he went. Discouragement has weakened the hands of many a servant, as the example of Elijah clearly shows. Of the true servant, the Lord Jesus, Isaiah said, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" (ch. 42:4). It is sad when a standard bearer faints (Isa. 10:18).

**"If the gospel be hid . . ."** (v. 3). The use of the word "hid" is significant. It is the verb form of the word for "veil" in ch. 3, and suggests that the apostle is still contrasting his ministry with that of Moses. But there is an important change. In v. 2 the contrast is with the false teachers mentioned in 2:17 and more fully later in

ch. 10-11:12. Their ways were disgraceful and underhanded, cunning, crafty and shameful (c. 11:3). They handled the Word of God in a deceitful way to gain popularity with their hearers. They diluted the message with legalism as well as with mere human philosophies. They were hypocrites. Paul renounced all such methods. He preached the truth without any admixture. This appeals to the conscience, while the other may appeal to the intellect of the unconverted. If the gospel remained veiled to any, it was to the perishing, whose minds had been blinded by Satan. This is specially true of Israel, but not limited to them. He is the god of this age, as well as the prince of this world and of the power of the air and of the powers of darkness. He is man's great adversary. He blinds him to the gospel of the glory of Christ, the final proof of Satan's defeat.

**"Image of God" (4:6). The two mediators contrasted.** It should be noted that the word likeness is never used of Christ in His relation to God. The word "shine unto them" is used in Acts 20:11 for "break of day". Satan wants to keep men in darkness. The apostle's reference to Christ Jesus **the Lord** (v. 5) is in keeping with what he says as to the gospel of the **glory** of Christ, and as to the abiding and unfading glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in contrast to the fading, transient glory in the face of Moses (v. 6). The light which Paul saw on the Damascus road when he saw the Lord was above the brightness of the sun (Acts 26:13; cf. Rev. 1:16). The face of Jesus Christ is the focal centre of God's glory. Paul parallels his experience at conversion with Gen. 1:3. It was not only an outward revelation, but an inward illumination as well, with a view to reflecting it. This is a Scriptural pattern for every true conversion.



**‘We have this treasure . . .’** (4:7-5:10). **Paul and the body.** In this section there are five references to the body, the only ones in the epistle apart from his use of the word in relating his unique experience in ch. 12. He also uses six metaphors for the body in these verses. The references to the body are in 4:10; 5:6, 8, 10. Then we read of the mortal flesh in v. 11. The six metaphors are (1) the earthen vessel (v. 7); (2) the outward man (v. 16); (3) the earthly house (5:1); (4) this tabernacle or tent (5:1, 4); (5) the outer garment (5:2-4); (6) our present home (5:6).

The passage is the second in which he describes at some length his afflictions. It may well be questioned if it can be paralleled for its complete abandonment to the will of God, its zeal and devotion to the cause of Christ. In it he dwells on three tremendous contrasts.

**(a) The treasure and earthen vessels (vs. 7-15).**

Two suggestions may be made with regard to the treasure. In the immediate context it would refer to what is said in v. 6 as to the knowledge of the glory of God. But in the wider context it would refer to the ministry committed to him (v. 1). The two are very closely associated. The ministry described in ch. 3 is epitomized in v. 6b. The earthen vessel is the body. It is but a fragile clay vase. The use of the term leads to a consideration of the important instructions regarding such vessels in Num. 19:14-15 and Lev. 11:33. They were easily defiled, and if defiled they were to be broken. Hence they had to be covered and protected. They were not to be left open, lest some creeping defiling thing would fall into them and defile their contents. Eyegate and eargate should be protected if the servant of God is to be preserved undefiled. Paul was a chosen vessel (Acts

9 : 15). Then we read of 1) vessels of mercy (Rom. 9 : 23); 2) cleansed vessel (Heb. 9 : 21) — a) by blood, and b) by water after use or defilement (Lev. 6 : 28; 4 : 32); 3) emptied vessel (2 Kings 4 : 3); 4) covered vessel (Num. 19 : 14-15); 5) filled (Ruth. 2 : 17); 6) poured (John 2 : 7); 7) marred through disobedience (Jer. 18 : 1-14); 8) a vessel unto honour (2 Tim. 2 : 21); 9) Every Christian should possess his vessel in sanctification and honour (1 Thess. 4 : 4).

**“that the exceeding greatness of the power . . .”** (v. 7). This is the first of several purpose clauses in the section under consideration (4 : 10, 11, 15; 5 : 4, 10). The power referred to is the power of God at its zenith, the power manifested in the results of his ministry, as well as in his preservation in his afflictions (vs. 8-9). So that it might be self-evident that this was of God, the apostle speaks of himself as but an earthen vessel. Jeremiah put the deeds of the purchase of the plot at Anathoth in an earthen vessel (Jer. 32 : 14). Compare also Judges 7 : 16-19.

**“Troubled . . .”** (8-9). The four graphic contrasts in these verses illustrate how the sustaining power was the power of God. The imagery is that of the battlefield, of conflict against strong opposing forces. In v. 8 the experience is an inward one, whereas in v. 9 it is outward. The first word in each case denotes the earthiness of the vessel, and the second the excellency of the power. He was in distress, but not completely shut up. He was bewildered at times, but never benighted or without hope. He was pursued as David was, but not abandoned to the foe. He was knocked down as by a dart, but not knocked out. He was as wounded by his pursuers, but not mortally. Though he was a seasoned warrior, the heat of the conflict made an impact on his spirit (v. 8) and likewise the pressure of the battle on his physical frame (v. 9). The prominence

given to death in these verses, along with the reference to the resurrection (v. 14), would suggest that at the time of writing the apostle was in severe bodily affliction.

**"Always bearing . . ."** (10-11). The words "always bearing about in the body the dying (or the putting to death) of the Lord Jesus" are difficult, but their meaning is explained and amplified in v. 11. He was always exposed to death (cf. 1 Cor. 15 : 31). Just as Jesus had been constantly persecuted, and at last became the willing victim of His persecutors, so the apostle was daily being hounded, and was prepared to die for "Jesus' sake". Previously he had said he was their servant for "Jesus' sake" (v. 5), and later in v. 15 he says, "all things are for your sake". The expression "The life of Jesus . . ." refers to the life that He lived on earth, the life of complete dependence upon and obedience to the Father. Such a life was being reproduced in the apostle. The use of the name "Jesus" would favour this explanation rather than taking it as a reference to the risen life (cf. Isa. 50 : 5-7).

**"So then death . . ."** (12-15). In v. 12 the apostle may be referring to the blessings of the gospel enjoyed by the Corinthians, which were in contrast to his constant exposure to death. On the other hand it is possible that he is speaking ironically, as in 1 Cor. 4 : 8-10, in which case the passage would be a rebuke. Either view is tenable, the latter preferable. The quotation from Ps. 116 : 10 makes it evident that the apostle reckoned that his experience was a duplicate of that recorded in the Psalm. The psalmist speaks of the pains of death taking hold upon him, and of finding trouble and sorrow, but the Lord preserved him. Paul applies all of this to his own case in the absolute assurance of the resurrection and of the recognition of his services among them by the Lord in that day.

**“All things . . .”** (v. 15) may refer to the things detailed in the preceding verses — his sufferings, or it may have a wider application (cf. 1 Cor. 3 : 21). If the former, it would illustrate the truth of Rom. 8 : 28. All his trials worked together for the greater blessing of the greater number, and thereby redounded to the glory of God. Such was Paul’s aim and delight.

(b) **The outward and the inward man** (16-18). In view of the fact that God worked through his sufferings to the blessing of many he would not become weary or lose heart or his courage (cf. Isa. 40 : 31). The term “the outward man” refers to the body, and in contrast to it the “inward man” refers to his spiritual, spirit-begotten life. This is evident from a comparison of the passages where it is used (Rom. 7 : 22; Eph. 3 : 16; 1 Pet. 3 : 4). While the outward was daily decaying, the inward was being daily renewed. His physical sufferings were not a weight on his spirit hindering his spiritual life and growth. This was because he viewed things in their proper perspective. He viewed time and its trials in the light of eternity and its triumphs. The daily renewal was the means of this divine enabling. Compare the daily manna (Exod. 16 : 14); the daily provision (2 Kings 25 : 30); the daily reading (Ezra 3 : 42); the daily praise (2 Chr. 30 : 28); and the daily care of the churches (2 Cor. 11 : 28); also the daily temptation in the case of Joseph, Samson and Mordecai (Gen. 39 : 10; Jud. 16 : 14; Esther 3 : 4). The contrasts between the affliction and the glory in v. 17 are astounding.

The affliction is light (cf. Matt. 11 : 30), whereas the glory is a weight, a burden.

The affliction is momentary, transient, whereas the glory is eternal.

The tribulation is transmuted into glory. This is the divine alchemy, the changing of the base metal into the precious. The apostle uses the word "hyperbole" twice in relation to the weight, as if he cannot find a word sufficiently strong to describe it. It is an exceedingly surpassing weight of glory.

**"While we look . . ." (v. 18).** These words may be understood as "if we look", or "as long as we look", or "because we look", or preferably, "looking as we do." Paul was not like those mentioned in 2 Pet. 1:9 who suffer from myopia and therefore cannot see afar off. Over against the temporal and the transient he placed the eternal, which he proceeds to enlarge upon.

### **(c) The temporal and the eternal (5:1-10).**

In these verses the body is viewed as an earthly house. Man's body was formed out of the dust, hence it is but a mud-walled hut. A few heavy showers and such a house if exposed soon goes into dissolution. Then again he views it as a tent, a wandering bedouin's tent, so easily taken down. Then again it is a garment, a robe. In the light of these metaphorical expressions death is viewed as 1) a dissolution of the mud-hut (v. 1); 2) the dismantling of the tent (v. 1); and 3) the discarding or disrobing of the outer garment (v. 4); then 4) a departure from one residence or home to another (v. 8); elsewhere 5) of a vessel from port (2 Tim. 4:6); and 6) a decease, an exodus from one country to another (2 Pet. 1:15). The body of glory to which he looked forward is not to be a mud-hut or a tent, but a building and a house, suggesting something more substantial. The words "not made with hands" are not intended to contrast the two bodies, but rather show the difference between earthly buildings and our future home, the building we are to receive, which will be



heavenly and eternal (cf. Col. 2 : 11; Dan. 2 : 34).

**“In this we groan . . .”** (5 : 2-4). In these verses the emphasis is focussed on the body as a garment. In this present earthly state the apostle groaned; he yearned and longed to be clothed upon. This is evidently a reference to what he later speaks of as “mortality being swallowed up of life, the coming of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 15 : 54). In v. 3 he introduces a qualifying statement as to not being found naked at the time. This may mean that he did not wish for death, as he further explains in v. 4. Paul entertained no doubt as to his being clothed with the garments of salvation, hence the words cannot justifiably be used with regard to the nakedness in the sense of being devoid of the garment of righteousness. (cf. Matt. 22 : 11-13). The word “naked” is not used as synonymous with being “unclothed.” In many Scriptures the word “naked” is used of being either scantily clothed, or of being unadorned. As an illustration of the latter we read that when Moses returned to the camp he found the people naked. They were “naked to their shame” (Exod. 32 : 25). That is, they were without any adornments. These had been used to make the golden calf. Could it not be that the apostle is contemplating such a possibility of being thus unadorned at the coming? It is very possible to be put to shame before Him at His coming (1 John 2 : 28), even as Aaron was when Moses returned from the mount (Exod. 32 : 21-22). In v. 4 he makes it clear that, while he was greatly burdened, he longed to be clothed upon with the future garments of glory. Some suggest that the term “naked” refers to the intermediate state, but the apostle does not discuss the condition between death and resurrection.

**“Now, He that has wrought us . . .”** (5-8). The believer is one who has been created in Christ Jesus. He

has been elected, foreordained, predestinated, called and justified with the ultimate aim of his glorification (Rom. 8:29-30). There is nothing uncertain about it. The Spirit has been given to him as the earnest of his inheritance. Because of this earnest, and because of the absolute certainty that God will bring His purpose to full fruition, the apostle had confidence or courage. As long as the present body was his home, he was absent from the Lord, or away from his heavenly residence. Consequently, faith in God and in His power to fulfil His promises and purposes is the principle by which we are to walk. The apostle has been enlarging on the "things that are not seen", hence we do not walk by sight. He repeats that he is of good courage, and willing to die, and thus be absent from the body. Death would usher him into the presence of the Lord, where he would be "at home", just as he was "at home" in the body. He was perfectly prepared for his migration to his new home with the Lord. The words "at home with the Lord" suggest a state of complete composure, the absence of any fear. We will only receive our new body, or be clothed upon, at the coming of the Lord.

**"Therefore we labour . . ."** (9-10). We make it our aim, or it is our great ambition, come life, come death, to be well pleasing to the Lord. The only occurrences of the word translated "labour" are Rom. 15:20 and 1 Thess. 4:11. It means to strive eagerly, to aspire, to be ambitious. The apostle's ambition to be acceptable to the Lord was based upon the fact that all believers must appear or be manifest in their true character before the judgment seat of Christ. Note the words **"we all"**. This judgment seat is not to be confused with the great white throne referred to in Rev. 20:11-15. We are assured that there is "no condemnation to them that are in Christ

Jesus", and also that we will not "come into judgment" (Rom. 8 : 1; John 5 : 24). Hence Paul was not concerned in this passage with his eternal destiny, nor was he contemplating the possibility of having to stand before the great white throne. The passages where the judgment seat of Christ is referred to make it clear that believers only will be there, and that all believers will be there. The purpose of the judgment seat is that everyone may receive, as a workman his wages, his award for what has been done while in the body, that is, for service rendered. The words "good or bad" are in the singular, and therefore do not refer to the deeds done "while in the body", but to the nature of the award. To receive the Lord's "well-done" will be good. To suffer loss will be bad.

It is a great mistake to think of the judgment seat of Christ as a sort of Sunday school prize distribution. The relevant passages in the epistles along with the parables of the Lord indicate that it will be a solemn court scene, a time of investigation and revelation. In Rom. 14 : 10-12 our individual and personal responsibility is emphasized, and that in relation to our brethren. In 1 Cor. 3 : 8-15 light is focussed on our service and its character. In 1 Cor. 4 : 3-5 our motives will be brought to light, that which has motivated us in our service or lack of it. The "hidden things of darkness will be brought to light." That should make us guard our motives, while in 2 Cor. 5 : 10 it is what we really are that will be revealed. All hypocritical masks will be torn away. The loss sustained, as suggested in the word "bad", will of necessity be permanent. There will then be no opportunity to make it good. (See note on 1 Cor. 3 : 12-15 and 4 : 3-5).

**"Knowing therefore . . ." (5 : 11-6 : 10). — Paul's motivations.** The Psalmist could say, "all my springs are in

Thee" (Ps. 87 : 7), and in these next verses the apostle lets us into the secret springs of his service.

1) **The fear of the Lord** (11-13). "Knowing therefore the **terror** of the Lord . . ." This word may denote "dread" and is so used in the gospels, but it is also used to denote a reverential fear, which does not contain the idea of dread or terror. It is in the latter sense that the word is used in this verse (Prov. 1 : 7). "We **persuade** men" — of what? In Acts 28 : 23 it is used of Paul seeking to convince men of the truth, but in view of the remainder of this verse it would not seem that the apostle has this in mind, but rather the matter of his sincerity and his integrity. He was fully known to God. He had nothing to hide. And as far as the Corinthians were concerned he hoped that they were all convinced of the purity of his motives.

"**But do we commend . . .**" (v. 12). By thus stating the facts he was not indulging in any self-recommendation, but he was supplying the believers with a legitimate reason for boasting of him and his work, as well as material wherewith they could answer the charges of false teachers, who boasted in that which was merely external rather than the internal, the inner life and a true heart.

"**For whether . . .**" (v. 13). Admittedly a difficult verse. His traducers evidently charged him with being beside himself or mad, even as Festus had said that he had a mania (Acts 26 : 24). Paul seems to accept the charge, and answers by saying that if that was the case it was in God's cause. Isaiah's action recorded in ch. 20 : 3 must have appeared like that of a madman to many. Ezekiel's actions likewise were very enigmatic to those who witnessed them. But these prophets acted as before God, and so did the apostle. On the other hand, if he was sober and acting with a sound mind it was for the good

and blessing of the Christians.

Some thought him to be an ecstatic, others that he humbled himself unduly. If so, then his periods of ecstasy were in God's presence, they were his personal experiences with the Lord, or before the Lord. But before men he was sober (cf. Acts 10 : 10-19).

Some charged him with being insane in the way he boasted of his authority as an apostle. If that was the case, it was in God's cause. Others thought he did not exercise his apostolic authority sufficiently. If that was so, then it was in the interests of the Christians.

2) **"The love of Christ . . ."** (14-16). The context makes it clear that Paul is not thinking of his love for Christ, but of the love of Christ for him as manifested in the cross. "He loved me and gave Himself for me." And "He gave Himself for the Church", and as a "ransom for all." (Gal. 2 : 20; Eph. 5 : 25; 1 Tim. 2 : 6; see also Eph. 3 : 19; Rom. 8 : 39). Paul says that this immeasurable love constrained him. The word translated "constrain" is rich in meaning, as is evident by the many ways it is translated in various passages in the New Testament. In Luke 19 : 43 it is used of the armies **hemming** the city in on every side. Escape would be an impossibility. The love of Christ thus placed definite limitations on his liberties. In Luke 22 : 63 the word is used of holding a **prisoner captive**. In Mark 4 : 34 it is used of the **overpowering effect of a fever**. The fever had compelled Peter's wife's mother to lie down. Similarly the love of Christ had completely overpowered the apostle. He was like the servant mentioned in Exod. 21 : 1-5, who was entitled by the law to enjoy liberty, but declined it and became a slave for life because of the power of love. He **submitted to being branded** by having his ears bored. The love of Christ for him was reciprocated by his love for Christ.



Paul had judged, that is, he had concluded, either by a process of reason or as the result of a divine revelation, preferably the latter, that if one, that is Christ, died for all, then all died. If the word "all" is to be understood as including all men everywhere, without distinction or exception, then His death "for" them is to be understood in its propitiatory character, as in 1 John 2:2, and the second clause should be understood as "all without exception" coming under that penalty. He died the death that was due to all. On the other hand, if the word "all" refers to those who would through faith become possessors of salvation, then the death is viewed in its substitutionary character, and the words "then all died" would refer to the fact that in His death they are viewed as having died (Rom. 6). The apostle is not concerned with discussing the question of the merits of the death of Christ; he does that in an epistle he wrote later (Rom. 5:12-21). Here the emphasis is laid upon the obligation which rests on those who have experimentally known the value of that death. It is incumbent upon them that they should live for the One Who died on their behalf, and Who is risen again. It is this practical aspect that fills the apostle's vision here. It was this that controlled him. It had revolutionized his aim in life and his attitude to all men. The words "we have known Christ after the flesh" (v. 16) are taken by some to mean that the apostle had known the Lord before His crucifixion. Such, however, is not the meaning. Before his conversion he knew Christ simply as "Jesus of Nazareth". Paul was like the nation, blind to His deity and Messiahship. His experience on the Damascus road changed all that. Ever after that Christ was to him the Lord of glory. And he did not estimate men according to their natural status, either racially or socially. This he enlarges upon in Rom. 3:1-20. As for believers, he would wish to view them according to the

measure in which Christ was seen in them (Col. 3:11). This is a vitally important principle in view of the rising tide of racialism and nationalism in the world today.

### 3) **The stewardship of the ministry of reconciliation and its responsibility (17-21).**

**Therefore if any man be in Christ . . .” (v. 17).**

Adam was the head of the old creation. Through Satan's rebellion and Adam's sin it was plunged into darkness and ruin. It will be dissolved in the final conflagration when the "elements shall burn with fervent heat" (cf. Heb. 1:11-12; 2 Peter 3:10-12). The fact that the same word is used in 2 Cor. 5:17 and in 2 Peter 3:10 indicates that Peter is referring to the implementation of the judgment which has already been passed. The verb "passed away" is in the past or aorist tense. Thus sentence has already been passed on everything connected with the old. We read of the "old serpent", the "old man", the "old covenant", the "old bottles", "old garments", "old wine", and the "old leaven". It is a mistake to interpret the verse as suggesting that at conversion all the old desires pass away, as the old nature, the flesh, still remains in every believer. As Adam was the head of old creation, so Christ in resurrection is the head of the new creation. Hence "if any man be in Christ", that is, identified with Christ in resurrection, he belongs to that new creation, the "new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13). This is our ultimate hope. In the meantime we rejoice in the many "new" things the New Testament speaks of. These are not new in relation to time, but in relation to their nature and character or quality. We read of the "new covenant", "a new commandment", "a new man", that is, a new type or character

of manhood, a new life, that is, a new kind of life (Rom. 6 : 4), and a "new man" in the sense of a new race (Eph. 2 : 15). Then again we read of the believer's "new name", and his "new song", etc. Christ in resurrection introduces a completely new order of things.

**"All things are of God . . ."** (v. 18). All things pertaining to reconciliation have been initiated by God, even as the old creation owes its existence to God's creative act. In verses 18-21 there are four aspects of the Christian's life. He is one **for whom** Christ was "made sin", and he has been reconciled to God **through** Christ. He is viewed as **"in Christ"** and is to be a witness for Christ. Paul regarded himself as Christ's representative, as speaking on Christ's behalf. To him had been committed the "ministry" or the "word" or message of reconciliation, which he states in v. 19.

**"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself . . ."** These words are not to be understood as substantiating the deity of Christ, or the unity of the Godhead. They rather indicate what God did or accomplished in and through Christ in His substitutionary sufferings. They denote the purpose for which Christ came. He did not come to judge or condemn the world (John 3 : 19), by imputing its trespasses unto it. He came to remove the barrier to peace between God and man. There could be no peace until the cause for the enmity, sin, was put away. Thus reconciliation is a work initiated by God, and done by God and for Him through Christ. It is an accomplished act. The work of the Holy Spirit in the individual which is complementary to it is repentance. But the two must not be confused.

**"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ"** (v. 20). The "word" of reconciliation having been committed to him,

the apostle thereby was constituted an ambassador, whose word or message or ultimatum is : "Be ye reconciled", or receive the reconciliation. As an ambassador Paul proclaimed an amnesty. This he did in Christ's stead, on the behalf of Christ. The words "Be ye reconciled to God" are not to be understood as an appeal to the Corinthian Christians, but as a restatement of the gospel appeal to the unconverted. The righteous basis for it, or that which makes the appeal valid, is given in v. 21, which contains the very essence of the gospel message. As all or every Christian is not called to preach, so all may not claim to be ambassadors, but as Christians we are all connected with the embassy, and each one has a responsibility as being connected with that which represents the cause of Christ in the world.

**"For He hath made Him to be sin for us . . ."** (v. 21). In this verse there are three statements of the utmost importance. They concern :

**1) the sinlessness of Christ.** This is a cardinal truth of Christianity. It is clearly and emphatically taught in the New Testament Scriptures.

a) **"He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth"** (1 Pet. 2 : 22). There was no deed for which He had to repent, no step which He had to retrace, no word He had to recall, and no thought which He had to regret. His life was "without spot or blemish." (Lev. ch. 2).

b) **"In Him is no sin"** (1 John 3 : 5). Though He came of the seed of David and of Abraham as to the flesh, and was the seed of the woman, there was no taint of sin in His nature. He was intrinsically and perfectly holy.

c) **"He knew no sin"** (2 Cor. 5 : 21). "The negative participle used here implies the fact of sinlessness as

present in the consciousness of Christ." (Vincent). "The negative implies that it is regarded as the verdict of someone else other than the writer. It was Christ's own verdict on Himself." (Denny).

d) **He was never tempted by sin** (Heb. 4 : 15). He endured all the trials of life which are the common lot of all. He was tried in all points such as we are, apart from sin. When we are tempted we are drawn away of our own lusts, whether it is by coveting or by insincerity or guile or pride or any of the grosser sins. The other places where the word translated "without" in Heb. 4 : 15 is used make it clear that it is used in the sense of "apart from sin" (cf. 9 : 22; 11 : 6). He was tempted by Satan to be deflected from the path of dependence and obedience, but overcame him by the Word, the sword of the Spirit. The wilderness discovered Israel's sinfulness (Deut. 8 : 2-3), but it revealed the Lord's perfection (Matt. 4).

II) **His substitutionary sufferings.** "He was made sin for us." These words refer to His death. The words "made sin" are interpreted by some to mean that He was made a sin-offering. This is evidently the meaning of the similar expression in Rom. 8 : 3; "God sending His own Son . . . for sin". These words can properly be understood as a sacrifice for sin. On the other hand it is thought that the words in 2 Cor. 5 : 21 are not adequately explained by the term sin-offering. The words "made sin" would suggest that during the three hours of darkness, He was treated by God as if He were sin itself. Compare 1 John 5 : 10 where it is said that those who believe not God make Him a liar, that is, they treat Him as a liar. So on the cross Christ was made sin and endured judgment as such, and that for us. This is the basis of reconciliation



and justification. At the cross the just demands of divine justice as expressed in the law were fully satisfied and vindicated. There righteousness and peace met together. In human relationships reconciliation is the result of setting things right by both parties, as there are likely to be faults on both sides. "But not once is God said to be reconciled. The enmity is alone on our part. It is we who needed to be reconciled to God, not God to us, and it is propitiation, which His righteousness and mercy have provided, that makes the reconciliation possible to those who receive it." (Exp. Dict. W. E. Vine). The word used for mutual reconciliation in Matt. 5 : 24 is never used of sinners being reconciled to God.

III) **The salvation provided.** "That we might become the righteousness of God in Him." So we have a perfect Saviour, Who became a perfect sacrifice, and thereby provided a perfect salvation. In Him we are reckoned righteous, completely free from every charge. That is why the apostle triumphantly issues the challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" The believer has a perfectly righteous standing before God, and in God's presence.

#### 4) **The urgency of the opportunity** (6 : 1-2).

"We then as workers together . . ." (6 : 1). This may be understood as working in fellowship with God, or as those who were fellow-workers, in which case it would emphasize the fellowship that existed between the apostle and his fellow-workers.

"beseech or entreat also . . .". The exhortation that follows is to be understood as complementary to the appeal of 5 : 20. Just as in 5 : 20 it is not a direct appeal to the Corinthians, so here it is a statement of what was Paul's

customary practice in his ministry. He not only urged that the reconciliation be received, but that the receiving of the grace of God in reconciliation be fruitful or not in vain in their lives. It should lead to service as it had done in the apostle's life (1 Cor. 15:10). He looked for fruit following the receiving of God's reconciliation.

**"I have heard thee in a time accepted . . ."** (v. 2). "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." This is a quotation from Isa. 49:8 and partly from Ps. 69:13. The "accepted time" of the prophecy is now the "well-accepted time". The day of salvation is the interval or the period of time during which salvation would be made available to the Gentiles. It is the time for the most favourable acceptance possible. The verse is often quoted when seeking to persuade sinners to receive the gospel, but in their context they are an exhortation to Christians to buy up the opportunities. It was one of the things which motivated the apostle. He wished to redeem the time and avail himself of every opportunity to preach the gospel. So should we, for "the night cometh when no man can work." Our day of opportunity will soon be past and gone.

#### 5) His zeal for the ministry (6:3-10).

**"Giving no offence . . ."** (3-4a). As the servants of God he and his fellow-workers were careful of two things:

(1) Negatively not to put a stumbling block in anyone's path.

(2) Positively commending themselves as ambassadors and workers in all their varied circumstances. "All was in order that the ministry be not blamed. This he used as a lever to exhort the Christians also. "Giving no offence", "approving ourselves" and all the other participles down to

v. 10 are the nominatives, or are grammatically attached to "we entreat" you. This shows the pains he took to enforce the exhortation by example as well as by precept." (Alford). Paul was, as this passage (5 : 11-6 : 10) suggests, motivated in his service by five powerful levers :—the fear of the Lord, the love of Christ, the stewardship of the ministry of reconciliation, the urgency of the opportunity, and by his zeal for the ministry that it be not brought into any disrepute.

"In much patience . . ." (4b-10). These verses are an eloquent and impassioned statement. The apostle is describing a spiritual warfare, the conflict in which he was engaged. The words flow like a torrent and must have been written with a great depth of feeling. Three essential things are mentioned, and they are indispensable :—

(1) **Patient endurance** (4-5). "In much patience". The many ways in which such steadfastness will be necessary may be seen from the following nine expressions. They depict a variety of experience : The first three form a group, and describe in a general way his physical, pecuniary, and spiritual difficulties. The second group refers specifically to what he suffered at the hands of the enemies of the gospel. The last three speak of his abandoned self-sacrifice in the service of the gospel;

(2) **Preservative graces** (6-7a). Sterling qualities are necessary in order to stand up to such trials, and engage in such a warfare. Eight are enumerated : **Pureness** — moral purity and sincerity of motive. "Keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5 : 22). **Knowledge** — an experimental knowledge of the grace of God, and a knowledge of God and His Word, as well as a knowledge of Satan's devices, and of the way the enemy attacks. Ignorance is dangerous. **Longsuffering** — the ability to bear with others.

**Kindness** — even after showing longsuffering. The words are an echo of 1 Cor. 13:4. **Love** without hypocrisy, a true love for the unsaved as well as for the people of God. The other three, the **Holy Spirit**, the **word of truth**, and the **power of God**, point to the only effective means whereby victory may be assured;

(3) **The panoply and paradoxes (7b-10).** "The armour of righteousness." In Ephesians 6 a fuller description of this armour is given. In the left hand he holds the shield of faith, and in his right the sword of the Spirit. The righteousness referred to may be interpreted as judicial righteousness, his righteous standing before God, his justification, and it is important that the servant of God should be clear as to this. Or it may apply to the moral rectitude which should characterize a servant. Both may be intended. All the items mentioned or detailed in Ephesians 6:16-17 are included in the term "armour of righteousness". The two couplets in v. 8 go together. That is, honour and good report; and dishonour and evil report. Satan may use either, hence the need for the armour, lest the one might lead to pride and the other to dejection. In verses 8-10 the apostle mentions seven paradoxical experiences, but nevertheless true "**as deceivers**", charged with being an imposter, and not a true apostle.

"**As unknown**" may be understood literally, or it may mean that he was of obscure reputation, and many who thought they knew him did not really know him. No man was more misunderstood than he was, yet on the other hand he was well-known to a large number, and held in good repute by them.

"**As dying**". He was thought to have been dead at Lystra (Acts 14:19). Then his deliverance referred to in 2 Cor. 1:9 suggests that he was at death's door. His enemies

thought they had seen the end of him, but, behold, he was still alive and active (cf. Ps. 118 : 17). .

**“As chastened”**, considered by many to be the evidence of God’s judgment and displeasure. On the contrary they were opportunities for the preserving power of God to be displayed. The verse is practically a quotation of Psalm 118 : 18. Parts of the Psalm are Messianic (see vs. 22-24).

**“As sorrowful”**. In Rom. 9 : 1-3 Paul speaks of the continual sorrow he had in his heart for Israel, his kinsmen. He shared the sorrows of the “Man of sorrows”. Yet he was always, constantly rejoicing. He knew the joy unspeakable and full of glory. Hence he could write Phil. 3 : 1; 4 : 4.

**“As poor”**, destitute at times, following in the steps of Him Who became poor, and yet thereby becoming the means and channel through which the lives of many were enriched for eternity. He had learned **how** to abound and **how** to suffer need, and be in want (Phil. 4 : 11-12).

**“As having nothing”**. Having no property or possessions on earth, no home that he could call his own, nothing to bequeath, yet he possessed wealth untold and an inheritance exceeding anything that could be acquired with money here.

## **B. Exhortation (6 : 11-7 : 1) —**

### **Ministry of sanctification.**

**“O ye Corinthians . . .”** (v. 11). The Lord changed Simon’s name to Cephas, but when he acted according to his old Simon character the Lord addressed him still as “Simon, Simon”. The Corinthians were saints, but they



were walking as men, so the apostle stigmatizes them with being Corinthian in character, even as he does the Galatians — ‘O ye foolish Galatians!’ (Gal. 3 : 1). No such stigma adheres to the name Philippians in Phil. 4 : 15. “Our mouth is open unto you . . .” (v. 11). That is, we have spoken very freely and frankly to you without any reserve. “Our heart is enlarged” (v. 11). In the days of Solomon we read the nation had become as the sand upon the sea-shore (1 Kings 4 : 20, 29). His heart was thus enlarged to embrace all the people of God (see also Ps. 119 : 32 and Isa. 60 : 5). Paul was not straitened in his affections for the Corinthians. On the contrary it was they who were restricted. “Now for a recompense . . . be ye enlarged” (v. 13). He desired that they would compensate him for his love, by reciprocating it. He coveted their love and affection because they were his spiritual children. But in the light of the exhortation that follows they also needed to be enlarged in their apprehension of 1) the unique glory of Christ; 2) the protective power of God, and also 3) the distinctive character of their new-found faith.

In these verses the apostle speaks with no uncertain sound as to the need for a complete separation from idolatry. Evidently what he had said in chs. 8-10 of the first epistle had not been sufficient, and some were still fearful of making a clean break.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . .” (v. 14). In Lev. 19 : 19 and Deut. 22 : 9-11 there are recorded strict instructions regarding plowing with an ox and an ass together, and sowing with divers seeds, and in Deut. 7 : 3 regarding intermarriages. The apostle draws upon this illustration to enforce separation on the Corinthians. Note the four commands, the precepts

in the passage: "Be ye not unequally yoked"; "come ye out"; "be ye separate"; and "touch not the unclean thing."

**Note the five-fold appeal in the form of five questions :—**

- 1) What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? (or iniquity and lawlessness, R.V. & J.N.D.). They are diametrically opposed principles. Fellowship means holding something together in common with another, but these two have nothing in common. One is the underlying principle in the government of the kingdom of God, while the other is the basic principle in the kingdom of darkness.
- 2) What communion hath light with darkness? These are diametrically opposed elements. Communion means common interests resulting from communion of life. The two elements cannot be mixed. They are antagonistic the one to the other. Darkness hides. Light reveals (cf. Gen. 1 : 4).
- 3) What concord hath Christ with Belial? They are diametrically opposed persons. Concord means there is agreement in sound and voice with one another, true harmony. The word Belial is used here only in the New Testament, and refers to Satan.
- 4) What part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (unbeliever in R.V. & J.N.D.). These are diametrically opposed faiths. The infidel in view is the man who acknowledges the existence of God, but denies a personal God and the possibility of any contact with the Living God on the basis of faith, and not the infidel of the type of Bob Ingersoll. It is pantheism which parades in the West as Christian Science.

5) What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? They are diametrically opposed systems. To be in agreement means to hold a common opinion. Idolatry is a system of worship invented by man (Rom. 1 : 21-32) and must eventually bring upon it the judgment of God. A living man and a lifeless idol can have nothing in common.

The church at Corinth was the temple of the living God. As such it was God's dwelling place. Therefore the **presence of God enjoins separation** (cf. Exod. 25 : 8; 29 : 45-46; 33 : 3, 15-16).

Then note the seven promises in the portion, given to encourage separation :—"I will dwell among them. I will walk among them. I will be their God. They shall be my people. I will receive you. Ye shall be my sons and daughters." A wonderful constellation of stars to brighten the firmament.

Note also the power of God to enable them to embrace the promises — the Lord Almighty. Those who would forsake their idols need not fear. The Lord in His sovereign power would protect them. This is the only occurrence of the word in the epistles of the New Testament. Note how these four : the precepts, the presence, the promises and the power, are effectively illustrated in the life of Abraham. "Get thee out" (Gen. 12 : 1; Acts 7 : 3); "Come into the land"; "I will bless thee" (Gen. 12 : 2); "I brought thee out" (Gen. 15 : 7). It need hardly be said that the passage affords no basis for separation from Christians.

Ch. 7 : 1 is an exhortation to the Corinthians to appropriate the promises given and to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh — immorality; and of the spirit — idolatry. Thereby they would perfect holiness,

and there would be progressive conformity to Christ, in the fear of God.

### C. Paul and his consolation (7 : 2-16).

The word "comfort" or "consolation" appears often in this chapter. The source of it was the good news brought back from Corinth by Titus as to the way they had received him and the letter sent through him.

"Receive us . . ." (v. 2). These words are an echo of what he had said in 6 : 13 where he had exhorted them to be enlarged in their affections for him, even as they were in his heart (v. 3). The word "receive" does not suggest that they had refused or rejected him, but that they were straitened in the warmth of affection which should have characterized them in their attitude towards him (cf. Matt. 19 : 11-12).

The words "we have wronged no man" (v. 2) are enlarged in ch. 7 (see v. 12); and the words "we have corrupted no man" in chs 10-11 (see 11 : 3); and "we have defrauded no man" in chs 12-13 (see 12 : 17). Neither by his conduct among them, nor by his doctrine had he wronged or corrupted them, and he had never made gain of them.

The words "I have said before" (v. 3) are doubtless a reference to 6 : 11. His affection for them was such that he would die with them as well as live with them. The order of the words is suggestive (cf. Phil. 1 : 20). He did not wish the words he had written to be interpreted as though he had passed judgment on them. On the contrary he had great confidence in them (cf. v. 16), and boasted of them as he had done to Titus (vs 4, 14). His joy was overflowing, because of the news brought by Titus.

"For when we . . ." (5-16). With v. 5 the apostle reverts to what he had said in 2 : 13 as to his going to Macedonia because he had no rest in **his spirit**. Now he says he had no rest in **his flesh** on his arrival, because Titus had not arrived there before him. The burden he was bearing in his spirit had affected his body. Externally there were foes — adversaries (1 Cor. 16 : 9) — and internally there were fears, apprehensions as to the Corinthians and the letter and Titus. These things made him downcast, rather than lowly or humble. He was afflicted. As such the Lord had mercy on him (cf. Isa. 49 : 13), comforted him, gave him rest of mind and body. The arrival of Titus had brought relief, but more than his actual arrival, the news that he brought of the assembly, and how he had been comforted by them, and how they had manifested a true love for the apostle, all filled him with joy overflowing. Titus refers to three things. They evidently earnestly desired to see the apostle. They greatly mourned for their past behaviour, and were now fervent in their preparedness to defend the apostle against his traducers and enemies. It must have been with some fear that Titus had left with the letter referred to, but he had returned with joy (v. 13). He had been received with "fear and trembling" (v. 15), he had been comforted in them (v. 7), and his spirit had been refreshed by them (v. 13). Paul's joy is four-fold :— 1) In the joy of Titus (v. 13); 2) in their repentance (v. 9); 3) in their attitude towards him (v. 7); and 4) finally, that he had confidence in them in all things (v. 16). The letter written and sent by Titus, which is referred to in these verses (8, 12), is thought by some to be the first epistle, but it is difficult to think of anything in that to cause the apostle to regret having written it. Then again there is nothing in the closing chapter of the first epistle to suggest that Titus was sent as its bearer.



Others again suggest that the portion of the second epistle, such as chs 10-13, form part of that letter, but again there is nothing in these chapters which could cause the apostle to regret writing them. The most satisfactory conclusion is that this letter, like that referred to in 1 Cor. 5:9, is no longer in our possession. From v.8 it is quite evident that the letter was couched in strong and stern language. Paul's reference to his having regretted writing it furnishes us with an exquisite picture of his sensitiveness of spirit. It is an encouragement to realize that he was a man of like passions to ourselves, in that he too had causes for regret. The letter had produced sorrow, and that in turn had produced repentance. This the apostle describes as godly sorrow, which is in marked contrast to the sorrow of the world, the remorse of a Judas. In v.11 the apostle details the seven things effected by this godly sorrow. It is a seven-fold description of the salvation mentioned in v.10. This salvation is not that of the sinner, nor is it here the fruit of repentance in the unsaved, but the salvation of the assembly from the danger it was in. Their repentance saved them from a very serious situation. It meant the restoration of apostolic authority. However, true repentance in the individual sinner, or in an individual believer who has sinned, should bear the same fruit as here described. It is suggested that the first of the seven, carefulness, is general, and that the other six form three pairs; the first pair, clearing of themselves and indignation, showing its relation to themselves; the second, fear and vehement desire, their relation to Paul; and the third, zeal and revenge, their relation to the offender concerned. As to who the offender and the offended (v.12) were, depends on whether it is considered that the reference is to the person guilty of incest in 1 Cor. 5, or to someone who had in some special way led a rebellion against Paul. The

latter is preferable as being more consistent with the context. In that case Paul was the offended. But the apostle makes it clear that the primary purpose of the letter was not for the sake of the individuals concerned, but that their care for him might become manifest. Their zeal and obedience had to have an opportunity to be registered in this proper way. Paul had boasted of them to Titus, and this boast was proved to have been not without reason. The "fear and trembling" do not suggest any panicky feeling, but a genuine fear lest they should not honour him sufficiently. The expression is used also in 1 Cor. 2 : 3; Phil. 2 : 12; and Eph. 6 : 5. The idea of panic is not inherent in any of these passages. He concludes the section with a statement of his joy, based upon the confidence or courage he had in them. The context would favour the word "confidence". It was this that gave him courage. It strengthened him for further ministry.

#### **4. Paul and his ministering to the saints (8 : 1-9 : 15). Paul and his charity.**

By having stated in 7 : 16 that he had confidence in them in all things, the apostle had created the necessary atmosphere, as it were, to introduce the matter of the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem. The apostle approaches the subject with consummate skill, and with divinely given wisdom. The exhortations given are of permanent value concerning the principles of Christian giving. He commences with a rehearsal of :

##### **A. "The grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia" (1-5).**

In order to encourage the Corinthian saints to give, he first records the example of the Macedonian Christians,

emphasizing that what they did was the result of the grace of God operating in them or given to them. Note the expression "churches of Macedonia" — not the church of Macedonia (see note 1 Cor. 1 : 1).

**"How that in a great trial . . ." (2-4).** They were passing through persecution and were in deep poverty, yet they gave with true motive, and nothing ulterior. And they gave beyond their ability, asking that they might be given the privilege of contributing to the need of the saints in Jerusalem. The spring of their liberality was their deep joy in the Lord (v. 1). But they did not give of their money without a corresponding spiritual exercise. Hence in v. 5 he tells how they first, as the matter of greater importance, dedicated themselves to the Lord, and secondarily they gave of their means. They recognized the claims the Lord had on them first, and then the claims of their fellow-believers through the apostle.

**B. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" (8 : 6-15).** The prodigality of the Macedonian Christians stimulated Paul to send Titus once again to Corinth so that he might perfect or complete this grace in them also. This may mean that he was urging Titus to bring to completion the matter of the collection which he had initiated when there among them, or it may mean that Titus was to seek to get the Corinthians to imitate the grace, which had been manifested in the saints of Macedonia. The former is probably the correct meaning. The apostle does however, use the zeal of the Macedonians as a lever to exhort the Corinthians to prove their love to him and its genuineness by excelling in the matter of "this grace", just as they excelled in the other gifts mentioned. The words "this grace" should possibly be interpreted as referring to the collection, in the same way as in v. 6. But it is possible that they could

be explained as referring to the grace of unostentatious giving, such as characterized the Macedonians.

“Ye know the grace . . .” (v. 9). The unparalleled example of Christ is given. Note the use of the full title.

“He was rich . . .” This refers to His pre-existent external state. It is an incidental reference, but it established the apostolic doctrine of the eternal glories possessed by Christ.

“He became poor.” This refers to His assumption of manhood, with its poverty-stricken condition in contrast to the glory that was His in His pre-incarnate state. It may also extend to the lowly circumstances connected with His birth. By thus becoming poor He did not empty Himself of deity, or cease to be what He was.

“. . . through His poverty.” This would include the poverty He experienced in His life (Luke 9 : 58; Ps. 22 : 18; John 19 : 24). It was a borrowed ass that He rode upon; a borrowed upper room that He used; and a borrowed tomb that His body was placed in. It was extreme poverty, and all connected with our salvation, for our sakes.

“ye might be rich,” enriched with every spiritual blessing now, and an eternal inheritance later.

“And herein . . .” (10-12). In these verses Paul urges them to complete what they with such readiness had commenced a year before. It is inexpedient to start something and then stop short of its completion. The Lord in His teaching warns against such a procedure (Luke 14 : 28). They were to give of their ability. This is enforced by what is practically a quotation from Deut. 16 : 10.

The Israelites were to present their free-will offerings according as the Lord had blessed them. In verses 13-15 the important principle of equality is introduced. He did not suggest that the Corinthians should be burdened to the extent that the recipients would be tempted to live a life of ease in luxury, and become lazy. While any giving should relieve the needy of their want, it should not be such as to induce laziness. The abundance of the Corinthian Christians would at that time meet the need of the poor in Jerusalem, but on a future occasion the position might be reversed and that day's donors might become the recipients of the generosity of others. In this connection he cites the illustration of the manna (Exod. 16). God warned them against hoarding it, yet they did, but to no profit, for it bred worms. The Lord supplied their necessities daily. Clearly the apostle's teaching implies that those who had been blessed materially to a greater extent than others should be prepared to use it to alleviate the needs of poverty-stricken fellow-believers. This principle applies not only locally, but internationally.

### C. The grace of God in the heart of Titus and others (8 : 16-9 : 5).

"Thanks be unto God . . ." (v. 16). The apostle had good cause to be thankful for the help Titus had been to him in connection with the difficult matters in Corinth. He had gone there with the letter (7 : 8), and had evidently been instrumental in that way to bring about a happier relation between the assembly and Paul. But he had not only done this, he had been given by God a zeal for the Corinthians. Unless he had had an earnest care for them, it is not likely that he would have accomplished much. Such zeal is the secret of being able to help others. He was glad to accept Paul's exhortation to go again in con-



nection with the collection to the poor. Verse 17 refers to this, and not to a previous visit.

**"We have sent with him . . ."** (18-19). With Titus two companions were sent on this mission. The first is mentioned in these verses. Neither is named, hence it can only be a conjecture at best as to who they were. The first one was well-known for his ministry in the gospel in all the churches, and was chosen of the churches to undertake this ministry. This is the only occasion when we read of a united action taken by assemblies. As in Acts 6, for such a ministry men were chosen for their fitness and proven integrity. The administering of the gift was to be primarily for the glory of God.

**"Avoiding this . . ."** (20-21). With the glory of God in view the apostle guarded against any false charges of misappropriation by seeing that one man was not made responsible, and that those chosen were men of proven reliability. In that way he was careful not only to have a clear conscience before God, but to be honest before men. This forms a pattern which is of great importance and should be followed in connection with money matters.

**"We have sent with him . . ."** (22-24). The second companion was one of equal diligence in many things, and one whose zeal in this matter was increasing in view of the confidence which either he or Paul had in the Corinthians. Probably the confidence referred to is that of the brother. Paul unhesitatingly commends the three of them. This would be of great value in case any should question their bonafides. Titus had been Paul's right-hand man, as it were, in the Corinthian affairs. The others were chosen by the assemblies as their delegates. They were not going around collecting money on their own. More-

over, they were the glory of Christ. They were His trophies and by their ministry brought Him glory. The apostle in closing his commendation urges the Corinthians to demonstrate, to give evidence of their love before the assemblies. This would include not only those in Achaia, but elsewhere. He also desired that thereby they would vindicate his boasting of them to others.

**“For as touching . . .”** (9:1-5). In these verses the apostle is continuing with the matter of the delegates and their mission, and his desire that it should be fruitful. He felt it was almost superfluous for him to go on writing to them regarding ministering to the saints. He had boasted of them in Macedonia, saying that they were ready the previous year, and their zeal had stirred up many. But he was sending the brethren beforehand to get everything completed so that when the Macedonians would come with him there would be no cause for him or them, the Corinthians, to be put to shame. He speaks of their gifts as their bounty, their blessing. It was not to be given in a miserly or covetous way, giving only as little as possible in a stingy manner.

**D. The grace of God in the Corinthian believers** (9:6-15).  
“The exceeding grace of God in you.” (v. 14).

**“He that soweth . . .”** (6-11). The last sentence of v. 5 leads the apostle to discuss some important principles concerning giving. It is compared to sowing. The man who sows sparingly is an illustration of the niggardly giver (cf. Prov. 11:18, 24, 25). See also references to sowing iniquity, the wind, to the flesh, spiritual things; and in righteousness, with the consequences (Prov. 22:8; Hos. 8:7; 10:12; Gal. 6:7-9; 1 Cor. 9:11). Note the three negatives in connection with giving. Not sparingly, not

reluctantly or with a grudge, and not of necessity, or just because there is a need which compels it. It should, on the contrary, be with liberality, and with cheerfulness. Compare Prov. 22:9 with the last clause of 7. The words "God is able to make all grace abound" indicate that God is able and prepared to increase the resources of the giver so that he may be able to abound still more in the grace of giving. Albeit this should not be a motive in our giving. Psalm 112:9 is quoted as evidence. The righteousness referred to applies to the righteous acts of the one who disperses his wealth by such almsgiving. The promise of v. 8 is further emphasized in v. 10. God who gives seed and bread (cf. Isa. 55:10) will increase or multiply their seed sown. The verse is not a prayer. Thereby (v. 11) the believer will be so materially blessed that he can increase his liberality, which will result in thanksgiving to God.

"For the administration . . ." (12-14). These amplify what is stated at the end of v. 11. In v. 11 the thanksgiving is said to be through the apostle and his fellow-workers, whereas in verse 12-14 the thanksgiving is from the saints, the recipients of the contribution. It supplies their wants and leads them to thanksgiving and prayer. The former, that is, the thanksgiving, is said to be because this test of giving proved the reality of the Corinthians' professed subjection or obedience to the Gospel, and also because of the liberality of their fellowship with them and all men. While the collection was for the poor in Jerusalem, the expression of their fellowship with them had a wider implication. It also led the saints in other places to pray for them, and begat a strong desire in them to see the Corinthians because of the exceeding grace of God thus manifested in them.

**“Thanks be unto God . . .”** (v. 15). This is the conclusion. The context would favour the suggestion that the “unspeakable gift” is the grace of God poured out in such an abundant measure on the Corinthians in this matter. But it is thought that the term “unspeakable” prohibits interpreting it as referring to any other gift than the gift of His Son. It is possible that the apostle, while contemplating the exceeding grace of God in the saints, recognized that it could only have been possible because of the ineffable gift of His Son. “Here we have Paul’s outburst of gratitude to God for the gift of His Son” (Hodge).

A few general remarks regarding this section might be made in conclusion. Of the five times the word “saints” is used in the epistle, three are in these two chapters. Its use reveals the light in which Paul viewed this ministry. Those for whom he was collecting were the Lord’s. The word money is not once actually used, but seven other words are used. We read of grace (8 : 1, 6, 19); ministry (8 : 4); fellowship (8 : 4); abundance or bounty (8 : 20); blessing (9 : 5); service (9 : 12); and liberality (8 : 2; 9 : 13). Seven times over grace is referred to in the two chapters.

## **5. The minister and the ministers of Satan (10 : 1-13 : 10). Paul and his glory.**

### **A. Paul’s apology in view of the charges made against him (10 : 1-18).**

It is reckoned that the word “boast” in its various forms is used some 31 times in this epistle, more frequently than in all his other letters. He was compelled to boast (12 : 11). Fully half of the occurrences of the word are in these last chapters. His opponents and traducers with whose activities the chapters are concerned are referred to in the preceding chapters also (2 : 17; 4 : 2). This shows that this

final section is not one that formed part of another letter, but was an integral part of this epistle.

**“Now I Paul myself . . .”** (1-2). Note the change from the “we” (Compare Gal. 5:2; Eph. 3:1; Philemon 19). The change is due to the fact that the apostle sets out to vindicate his apostleship and authority. The words “in presence base . . .” are referred to later (v. 10) as having been said by some special individual, possibly the leader of the opposition, spoken of as “such an one” (v. 11). In v. 1 Paul accepts the charge and makes it the basis of his appeal in v. 2. The word for “base” is not used in its proper sense of being lowly or humble, but of cowardice and lack of courage. At a distance they said he was very brave. As pointed out in the introduction to the epistle the expression “meekness and gentleness of Christ” refers to His character as the suffering servant of Jehovah. Meekness is that inward quality which is the opposite of being self-assertive, and it was manifested in our Lord’s submission to human indignities (1 Pet. 3:21-23). His gentleness was manifested in His actions, such as in John 8:1-11. Paul realized that as a servant he must follow his Lord. Hence he appeals to them, to avoid his necessity to be bold, as he reckoned he would be with those who charged him with carnal motives. His meekness was not to be interpreted as weakness, nor his gentleness as timidity.

**“Though we walk . . .”** (3-6). Though he walked in the flesh, as all other men, and therefore subject to certain frailties and limitations, he did not carry on his service and his warfare according to carnal methods and principles. He did not depend on oratory, philosophy, personality or finance. The words “through God” may be interpreted either as “divinely strong” or as “strong in the sight of God”, in contrast to that which is strong in the eyes of



man. The warfare is aggressive and not defensive. In this it differs from that in Eph. 6:13-18. The enemy is impersonal. The warfare is against theories, and against any rampart thrown up to resist the knowledge of God. His ministry is illustrated in that of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:10). It is not a subjective conflict, waged against his own nature and its evil tendencies.

**“bringing into captivity every thought . . .”** (v. 5) — that is, every purpose which has its seat in the will rather than the intellect, into subjection to Christ. He not only wished to demolish the enemy’s fortresses, but to lead men into captivity to Christ. He would wait till their obedience was completed before he would seek to act in disciplinary judgment against his traducers.

**“Do ye look . . .”** (7-11). Some translate this as a question, others as a statement of fact. The latter is preferable. It suggests that they judged things superficially. “If any man trust . . . that he is Christ’s . . .”, that is, Christ’s servant, and not just a Christian. Paul claimed to be such also. Such subjective claims must be tested. They cannot be accepted just on the individual’s own representation. The apostle goes on to supply evidence as to his being Christ’s servant. That the Lord had given him authority or power was evident from the way he had been used to build up believers in the faith. He could legitimately boast of this without any sense of shame. However, he did not wish to boast of his authority to exercise judgment lest he would thereby be seemingly open to the charge of seeking to terrify them with letters. That he had such power is evident from 1 Co. 5:5, 1 Tim. 1:20, and the case of Elymas (Acts 13:11). They were correct in acknowledging that his letters were weighty, but wrong in their judgment as to his presence being weak. Paul would

prove this when he would arrive in their midst, to the dismay of the arrogant pride of the leading opponent.

“For we dare not . . .” (12-18). In these verses he gives further proof that he is Christ’s servant. In v. 12, speaking ironically, he says he would not venture to include himself, or to compare himself with those who indulged in self-commendation. They had no rule, but that which they made for themselves, and only compared themselves among themselves, having no higher standard. This showed their lack of intelligence. On the other hand Paul had a “canon”, a rule, by which his path and sphere of service were marked out. God had measured these out. His sphere was amongst the Gentiles (Acts 9 : 15; Rom. 1 : 15; Gal. 2 : 8). And he did not build on another man’s foundation (Rom. 15 : 20). In accordance with these two principles he had gone as far as Corinth (v. 14). He would boast, but only of that which came within his divinely measured sphere (v. 13), and only in the results of what God had accomplished through him (Acts 14 : 27). His opponents on the other hand boasted in their self-made rules, and in the fruits of other men’s labours. In accordance with his God-given rule he hoped to preach the gospel in the regions beyond Corinth when their faith would be increased, and not when any home board would allot the money. Each Christian is to be a witness, and each assembly a missionary society, a centre for further advance. Paul’s rule referred to in v. 16 is mentioned above. He would not follow the rule of his traducers and boast in someone else’s work as if it were his own.

..“He that glorieth . . .” (v. 17). This is a quotation from Jer. 9 : 23-24. Paul was in the true “succession” of the Old Testament prophets. His letters show how much his spirit was saturated with their writings.

**“For not he that commendeth himself . . .”** (v. 18). This concludes the section. When a man indulges in self-commendation, in self-praise, he thereby forfeits the approval of the Lord. To have the commendation of the Lord, manifested by His blessing, is the only way to gain His approval, whether here or at the judgment seat of Christ.

Thus the apostle speaks of his divine authority (v. 8), his divine rule and sphere of labour (v. 13); and his divine approval (v. 18).

#### **B. Paul’s anxiety in view of the false apostles (11 : 1-33).**

Satan figures prominently in these two epistles. In 1 Cor. 5 : 5 we read of a man delivered to Satan; in 2 Co. 2 : 11 of the devices of Satan; and in 12 : 7 of the messenger of Satan. Then we read of the table of demons (1 Cor. 10 : 21); of Belial (2 Cor. 6 : 15); and of the serpent, and the god of this age (2 Cor. 4 : 4). But in chapter 11 Satan is as “an angel of light” and his ministers “as the ministers of righteousness” (14-15). He is the arch-enemy of everything that is of God. He is, as the word implies, the adversary.

**“Would to God . . .”** (1-2). In these verses the apostle dwells on his unique relationship to the assembly. He refers to the boasting of the previous chapter as “a little folly” and prays their indulgence and forbearance 1) because of the purity of his motive. He is jealous of them with a godly jealousy, that is, a jealousy which characterizes God in His dealings with His people. This is often spoken of in the Old Testament. In Numbers ch. 5 it is illustrated in the jealousy offering, when a husband had cause to suspect that his wife had been unfaithful; 2) because of his peculiar ministry and responsibility. He had espoused the assembly as a chaste virgin to Christ, and

he was anxious that she should not be defiled. He is like the servant of Abraham presenting Rebekah to Isaac (Gen. 24). Elsewhere he speaks of himself as "a wise master builder" (1 Cor. 3 : 10), and as having been entrusted with a special ministry for the Church (Col. 1 : 25). Paul's relation to the Church is very much the same as that of Moses to Israel. Paul had betrothed the assembly to Christ. This is one of the many metaphors used of the Church by the apostle. It is instructive to note Satan's activity in relation to each. As a temple of the Living God, Satan would rob it of its sanctity; as the body he would rob it of the ministry by division, and as a bride he would rob her of her chastity. The apostle feared that as the serpent tempted Eve through his versatility, so they would be turned aside from the simple-hearted devotion and purity towards Christ. Paul's reference to the temptation in Eden makes it clear that he fully and completely accepted its historicity. So must we. Satan succeeded with Eve through deception as to what God had said. Once the mind is corrupted as to this, then disaster follows. She failed to recognize the headship of Adam by acting on her own.

**"For if He that cometh . . ."** (4-6). "He that cometh . . .". This is a Messianic title (see Matt. 11 : 3; Heb. 10 : 37). The chief of the false prophets (v. 13) evidently assumed this title in his arrogant pride. He preached another Jesus — the Jesus preached by the Arians later, or by the Docetics, and by false cults, such as Jehovah's Witnesses today. They preached another — a different spirit, and a different gospel, which was no gospel. If this was the case, did they do well in receiving such a man? If this is the meaning, then the apostle is speaking ironically, as he does all through the passage. On the other

hand the words may be interpreted as meaning, "you bear with such, why not bear with me in my boasting?" In v. 6 he states his reason in another way. The words "the very chiefest apostles" have been explained in two ways. Some consider them to refer to the chief among the twelve, Peter and others, and that Paul is saying that he is not a whit behind Peter. In this way it has been used to disprove the superiority or supremacy of Peter. Others consider that as the apostle is discussing the merits and demerits of those whom he designates as "false apostles" in v. 13, it is these that he is referring to in v. 5. The expression "these superlative apostles" would definitely favour this interpretation. The expression is used again in 12 : 11. We take it that Paul is here speaking sarcastically of the false teachers and their bombastic claims. Paul was not a whit behind these in : 1) the matter of **reproaches** (11 : 33; 12 : 10-12); 2) the matter of **revelations** (12 : 1) — the false gloried in their fancied visions and their angelolatry (cf. Col. 2 : 18); 3) the matter of his resources (12 : 9-10). The grace and power of Christ were his in an abundant measure. In the first half of v. 6 he acknowledges that in the use of rhetoric and oratory or homiletics, the art of speaking, they might excel, but even that concession may be ironical. In the matter of knowledge, however, he would not accept the charge of being ignorant, as the word is rendered in Acts 4 : 13. There is a proverb which says, "He who knows not and knows not that he knows not : he is a fool — shun him; he who knows not and knows that he knows not : he is simple — teach him; he who knows and knows not that he knows : he is asleep — wake him; he who knows and knows that he knows : he is wise — follow him." Paul falls into the last category. He had consequently made the truth thoroughly manifest to the Corinthians. While it is true that the apostle had



been thoroughly made manifest among them, it is what he taught that is referred to here.

**“Have I committed an offence?”** (7-12). In these verses the apostle introduces the question of the way he was supported in his work. The fact that he worked was evidently used by his opponents as evidence that he was not a duly constituted apostle. In modern phraseology he would be dubbed a “layman”, although in this portion he does not refer to his working to support himself. However, they knew that he had done so. He had accepted the help sent by other assemblies, such as was sent through the brethren from Macedonia. By having preached the gospel to them freely, he asks with a note of sarcasm, “Did I commit a sin?” He had not been a burden to them, and was determined to follow this principle in the future. The words “as the truth of Christ is in me” may be understood either as an oath, a solemn appeal, an asseveration, a solemn declaration of his set purpose, or as in Rom. 9 : 1. Any of these is tenable. There were those who looked for an opportunity to charge Paul with preaching for money. He was determined to deny this to them, and thereby destroy their claim to be working on the same basis as he was. The facts of the case make it clear that their boast was a vain one.

**“Such are false . . .”** (13-15). Their apostleship was not genuine; it was spurious; “deceitful . . .” — they were crafty, they laid snares. They were hypocrites; “transforming . . .” — they changed their outward appearance. They put on sheep’s clothing. They, like the Pharisees, were of their father the devil (John 8 : 44). As Satan had changed his guise to that of an angel of light, so did his ministers profess to bring new light to the Corinthians, even as the serpent had done in Eden. He is more to be

feared as an angel of light than as a roaring lion. In 1 Kings 13 : 18, 24 we have an illustration of both. Satan's ministers do more damage in the pulpit than in the public house. Modernist professors at seminaries contaminate the stream at its source. Paul speaks sternly of their end and their doom (cf. Phil. 3 : 18-19). The rebellion of Korah recorded in Num. 16 is the divinely given illustration of these false apostles and their work (cf. Rev. 2 : 1-7).

"I say again . . ." (16-19). These words refer back to v. 1, and are introduced in view of what he is going to say further regarding his ground for boasting. He acknowledges that boasting is foolish, but appeals to them not to consider him a fool. However, if they did so, then he would ask them to welcome him as such, even as they had welcomed others who had gloried after the flesh, and were therefore fools (v. 9). He had already said, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," so it is the essence of folly to glory after the flesh as in v. 22. The words "seeing ye are wise" are strongly ironical.

"For ye suffer . . ." (20-22). Five characteristics of the false apostles are listed in v. 20 :—

- 1) By bringing Christians into bondage they robbed them of their liberty, either by bondage to the law and its weak and beggarly elements (Gal. 4 : 9), or to themselves;
- 2) They devoured the Christians, they preyed on them (cf. Luke 20 : 47). They had their own ways of extracting money from the assembly;
- 3) They took of them, or rather made captives of them, by deceiving them, catching them as fish with bait;
- 4) They exalted themselves. They evidently assumed some sort of priestly rights, possibly and probably basing this on the fact that in Israel the priests were a privileged class;
- 5) "If a man smite you." For

literal illustrations of this see 1 Kings 22 : 24; Matt. 5 : 39; Luke 22 : 64 and Acts 23 : 2. It may be mentioned here as symbolic of the way these false apostles humiliated the Christians.

These marks of the ministers of Satan should be compared with the "Nicolaitanes" (nikao-laos) — those who conquered the people, those who held the doctrine of Balaam the devourer. They doubtless describe the way Satan laid the foundation of the hierarchical system of Rome.

In v. 21 the apostle ironically reproaches himself for not having done any of these five things. The second half of the verse is explained and expanded in the following verse (22). What they laid great stress on as to their lineage was no more than what he could. As all the Lord's apostles were Hebrews, Satan would not try to introduce a Gentile into his apostolate.

"Are they . . ." (23-33). The apostle recounts his sufferings as the credentials of his being a servant of Christ. He says he speaks "as a fool", one who is out of his senses, not merely one who is lacking in sense as in the preceding verses. In v. 23 he mentions four ways in which he claims to be superior to these false apostles, the Nicolaitanes of verses 13 and 20. Labours, stripes, prisons, deaths. These are stated more specifically in verses 24-25, especially the last three, while that which amplifies his "labours" is continued in verses 26-29. In verses 24-25 five things are listed. It is only one of these, that of being beaten with rods at Philippi, that we read in the Acts. At the hands of the Jews, his own countrymen, he received the maximum (39) which they could inflict five times (Deut. 25 : 1-3). The lash which was used contained three thongs, and it often

tore chunks of flesh out of the victim. At the hands of the Romans he was thrice beaten with rods. Both of these forms of punishment were so severe that sometimes the victim died. The stoning was at Lystra (Acts 14:19). Of the three shipwrecks mentioned, not one is recorded elsewhere. The one which is recorded in Acts 27 occurred later. For a night and a day he was adrift at sea with only a plank or some part of the ship to cling to, and that in dangerous waters. Nothing is reported of it.

**“In journeyings oft . . .”** (26-27). The apostle enlarges on his labours referred to in v. 23. While on these journeys, he was in constant peril. He mentions eight sources from which they came. The rivers and the robbers cover two ways of travel; the Jews and the Gentiles; whether in the city with the mob or in the wilderness from wild beasts; the sea with its treacherous storms, and false brethren which were more treacherous. In v. 27 he mentions eight other things connected with his labours, possibly when living and working in a centre like Corinth or Ephesus. The first two would refer to his manual labour, though not exclusively. Toil and travail with their associated sleepless nights must also include his work in the gospel. Hunger, thirst and fastings form another triplet. The cold and nakedness possibly refer to his prison experiences, and find an echo in his request for the cloak to be brought to him at Rome later (2 Tim. 4:13).

**“Beside those things . . .”** (v. 28). This is variously interpreted. It may mean that the apostle is suggesting that apart from these outward trials there was the spiritual care of the assemblies — a daily burden. Or, it is suggested, the apostle is referring to two things apart from the eight rather unusual things listed — there was a daily pressure, as well as anxiety for all the churches. If this is

accepted, then it would mean that the apostle is referring on the one hand to the daily pressure from the false apostles, and on the other to the care he should naturally have for the flock of God. It is pointed out that the word for pressure is used in Num. 16:40 in connection with Korah's rebellion.

**"Who is weak?"** (v. 29). This enlarges on the last clause of v. 28. He sympathizes with the weak, and gets indignant at those who put obstacles before the Christians, as Galatians clearly shows. In 10:17 he had gloried in the Lord. Now he says that his boast is in infirmities. He will boast in his humiliations. He will wear them as his war medals. As there is always the great danger of exaggeration when relating personal experiences, the apostle calls upon God to witness to the truth of what he had said. Similar words are found in Rom. 9:1, Gal. 1:20 and 1 Tim. 2:7. Then as somewhat of a postscript to what he had written he relates the experience of God's deliverance which he had in Damascus. The experience of the basket must have been very humiliating at the time, but Jewish craftiness and Gentile power were thwarted, even as in the resurrection of Christ. In later years this must have been a great encouragement to the apostle. To attempt to comment on this summary of the apostle's experiences in a day of Laodicean ease is most humbling. His life and sufferings were like the burning bush, ever burning but never consumed.

### C. Paul's apostleship and credentials (12:1-19).

**"It is not expedient"** (1-6). The apostle chronicles his experience when he was caught up to the third heaven. This follows immediately after the record of the humiliating experience at Damascus. He commences by acknow-



ledging that while boasting was not wise or advantageous he was compelled to do so. He proceeds to give one illustration of the "visions and revelations" he had had. He gives the time, but not the place where he was at the time. He does not connect it with any event, such as the stoning at Lystra, although some do so. He speaks of himself as "a man in Christ." He is not referring to someone he knew in the past, but one whom he then knew. He was raptured up — caught up — the word used in 1 Thess. 4:17 of the rapture or catching up of the saints to meet the Lord. Whether he was caught up bodily or not he does not know. This he repeats, and it is important to note that thereby it is clear that being in the body is not a necessity for spiritual consciousness. The third heaven of v. 2 and paradise of v. 4 may be the same, but the latter is more specific. There are the aerial or etherial heavens, the sidereal heavens and then the third heaven — the heaven of heavens. Paul does not say that he saw the Lord on that occasion, but that he heard things which he was not allowed to reveal. The revelation was for himself alone, probably in view of all that he would have to endure later.

**"Of such an one will I glory, or boast" (v. 5).** What the believer is in Christ, and will be when the purposes of God in redemption will be completed and the believer glorified, in this Paul would glory. That was a fit subject for boasting, for it is all of God. But of himself he had nothing to boast save in the privilege of suffering for the Lord.

**"Though I would desire" (v. 6).** Even if he did boast, he would not exaggerate as a fool, but strictly adhere to the truth. He did not wish to create a false impression about himself.

"And lest I be uplifted" (7-10). As in v. 6 Paul had avoided listing any further experiences lest they should form a wrong estimate of him, now he says God had made a provision to preserve him from a wrong estimate of himself — from pride. He was given a thorn in the flesh. This is considered by some to be a festering thorn, and by others to be a stake on which he was impaled, as it were. For illustrations of the former see Num. 33:55, Ezek. 28:24 and Hos. 2:6. The words "in the flesh" are taken by some to mean 1) the body. If that explanation is accepted, the thorn must be some physical affliction such as Satan was allowed to inflict upon Job; see also Luke 13:16, which may be connected with the passage in Gal. 4:13-15; 2) the carnal nature with its inclination to pride, in which case the thorn would refer to something which constantly humiliated him in connection with his work, such as the enemies, the Judaizing teachers, or the false apostles, or men like Alexander the coppersmith, and Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 4:14; 2:17); then again 3) Satan hindered Paul from going to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:18; 4) another suggestion that the thorn represents lustful or blasphemous thoughts may be well ruled out. Such would be sinful, and therefore Paul would not glory in such infirmities. For the words in v. 8 the explanation of the flesh as being physical would be preferable, but the thoughts of both 1) and 2) above may be included. The thrice repeated petition for its removal is a reminder of Gethsemane. The answer he received would also lead to the same conclusion regarding the term "flesh" being physical. The grace and power of Christ were granted to counteract or counterbalance his weakness. He desired above all else that in his ministry he would know the power of Christ tabernacling over him, and dwelling in him. The first four of the five things

mentioned in v. 10 fall into pairs. Physical weakness coupled with insults from his enemies, and privation with persecution. The distresses and the straitened circumstances apply to both. He was not a fanatical fakir boasting of self-inflicted suffering. He boasted in these five things because he was enduring them for Christ's sake. That is only possible through the all-sufficient grace of Christ.

**"I am becoming . . ."** (11-19). He again acknowledges the folly of boasting, but necessity compelled him. And he again speaks of the very chiefest apostles, that is, the false apostles of 11:13. The signs of his apostleship which had been wrought among them should have resulted in their defending his claims. The three marks, "signs, wonders, and mighty deeds", are used of the Lord's ministry in Acts 2:22, of the apostles in Heb. 2:4, and of the Antichrist in 2 Thess. 2:9. John records seven miracles which he speaks of as signs. They were intended as signs to Israel, and they were wonders, for they begat astonishment. They were the credentials of the Lord's Messiahship. Paul adduces them as the credentials of his apostleship. Anyone claiming to be an apostle today should be asked to supply the same credentials. When the Antichrist appears, Satan will enable him to perform similar things for the purpose of deception.

**"For what . . . inferior . . ."** (13-19). Paul returns to the matter of his support. As the assembly in Corinth had been brought into being by him, and as he was inferior to these chiefest apostles, they were in no way inferior to other assemblies, except in the matter of his not having been a burden to them. For this he ironically asks their pardon, thereby emphasizing their ingratitude. However, he would follow the same principle when on his third

visit. He did not seek their wealth, but something more. He wanted their love and loyalty to him and to the Lord, and he sought their edification (v. 19). As a father he would show more love, and he asks, "Will you love me less in return?" Some actually changed him with guile, with trickery, with an evil motive in not being a burden to them. This he refutes in verses 17-18. He had sent Titus and another brother with him to them. Had he himself thereby, or had Titus and the other brother, taken any advantage of them, or made any gain, that is, any financial gain out of them? Both Titus and himself had walked in the same path, animated by the same spirit of love and service for them. Then in v. 19 the apostle makes it clear that he had not been seeking to prove things to them as if they were his judges. On the contrary he was seeking their edification, and he stands responsible to God, and speaks as being in fellowship with Christ before God.

#### **D. Paul's apprehensions and final warning** (12 : 20-13 : 10).

"For I fear lest . . ." (v. 20). This emphasizes the need for the edification mentioned in v. 19. The eight things listed in v. 20 all pertain to the works of the flesh, beginning with debate and envy, or strife and envy, and ending with tumults or public disorder. The assembly had become like the vineyard spoken of in Prov. 24 : 30-31. Where envy and strife is there is every evil work, so Paul feared also that immorality was still unchecked and the guilty still unrepentant. These two things explain his two-fold fear in v. 20, and he would be greatly humiliated before God because of these things.

"This is the third time" (13 : 1-4). The apostle renews the warning he had given when he was with them on the

second visit, that on his third visit he would not spare, but that all charges against him, and of sin amongst them, would be thoroughly investigated and severely dealt with (cf. Deut. 19:15). Some evidently still looked for some further proof of his speaking or acting on the authority of Christ, that is, in punishment, such as Acts 13:11. This proof he assured them would be given. He reminds them in v. 3 that Christ had manifested His might in their midst. This may refer to their conversion, but more probably to such things as recorded in 1 Cor. 11:30. While the cross was the essence of weakness in human eyes, as God had not acted in Christ's defence (cf. 1 Kings 13:4), nor had Christ acted in power, the cross was not the culmination. But it was a display of weakness. Now Christ is risen and has become the judge. The apostle by submitting to indignities and false charges had shared in the weakness (?), the seeming weakness of Christ. He had not retaliated. But as he had thus shared in that weakness, so he would be able to exercise judgment in fellowship with the living Christ.

"Examine yourselves . . ." (5-10). Rather than examine him, they should examine themselves, lest they would turn out to be reprobates, or false, after all. If Paul was a reprobate apostle, of necessity they were reprobates. If Jesus Christ was in them, then they were not reprobates. And if they insisted on proof of his authority, they would find his claim valid, not worthless. However, in verses 7-9 he prays that their life may be such that he will not have to show proof of his power, even if that should seem to prove that his claim to have that power was not genuine.



His great desire was the furtherance of the truth of the gospel among them, and he would be glad if they had grown strong so that there would be no need for him to exercise his apostolic authority, and thereby seem weak. He desired and prayed for their restoration (v. 10), not their perfection in the sense of maturity. He wrote with the hope that this would thereby be brought about. Then there would be no necessity for sharpness, or the solemn act of excommunication and judgment.

## 6. The concluding admonition and benediction (11-14). Paul and the Trinity.

In his final farewell he gives four injunctions. They recapitulate much of what he has said in the epistle:— 1) be perfect, set right the things that are wrong, be fully restored; 2) be of good comfort. This reverts to 1 : 6-7 and 7 : 8-13; 3) be of one mind. This again would remind them of what had been said regarding division and party strife; 4) live in peace. This would recall the exhortation regarding going to law in the first epistle, as well as the reference to tumults in the second. And then—as a result—the God of love and peace would be with them, in their midst in realized power. Only if the injunctions of v. 11 were observed could they carry out their usual customary greeting in a truthful way. In v. 13 the apostle adds a salutation from all the saints.

In the closing benediction the apostle invokes blessing upon them all, irrespective of all the party strife and divisions, or of those who were his opponents. The blessing invoked is a clear recognition of the Trinity. The order

in which the persons are named may be suggestive of the fact that it is only through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that we experimentally come to know the love of God, and it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that this may be realized. The doctrine of the one God subsisting in three persons is fundamental and of vital importance to all Christian experience. This same blessing of the New Testament corresponds to that recorded in Num. 6 : 24-26.

May this benediction be upon every reader.

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